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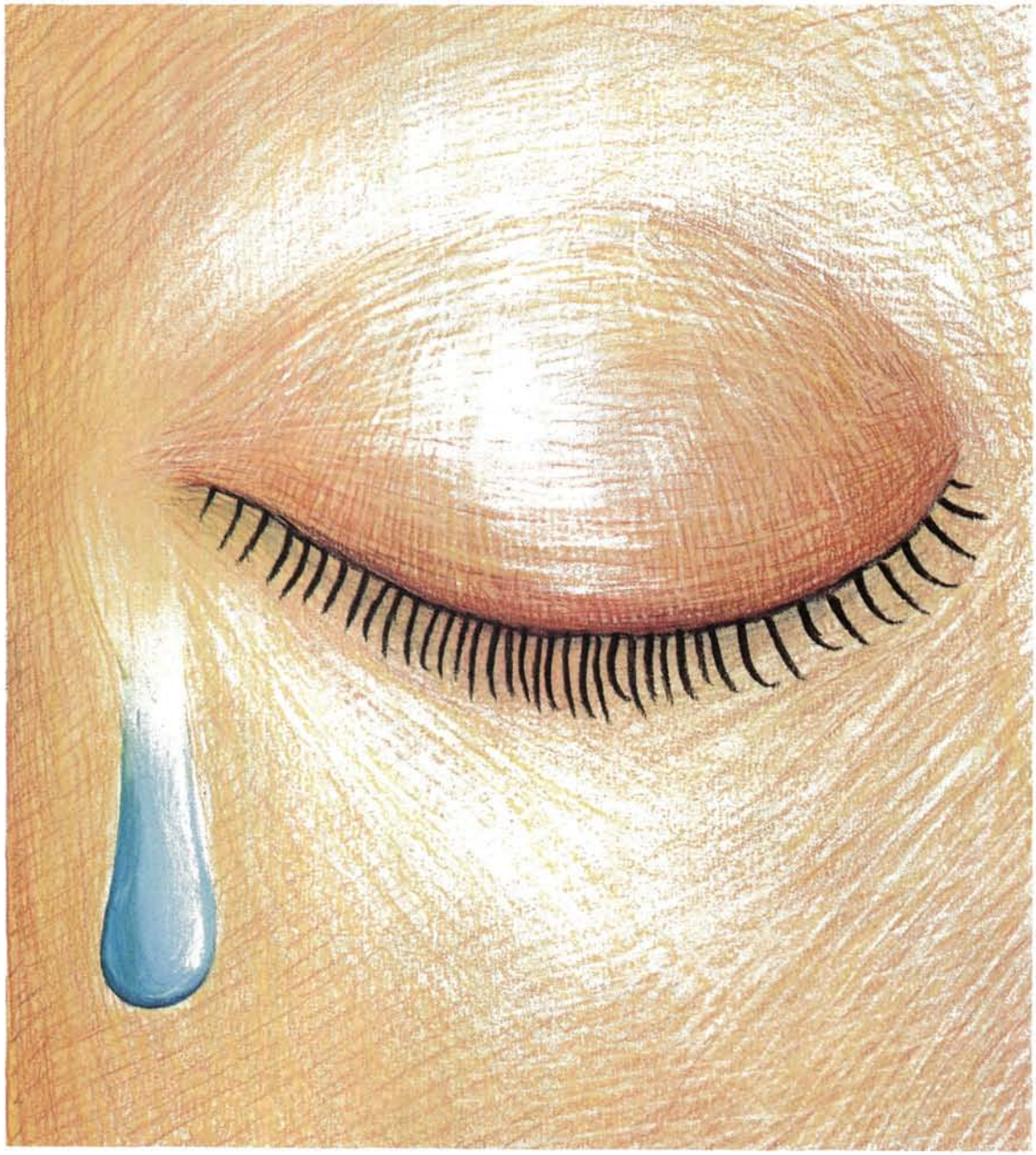
Politics: Fred Halliday on the Gulf summit

Arts: Monet; Agatha Christie; Taggart; totalitarian art



Lost horizons

Eric Hobsbawm on the loss of hope and the need for utopias

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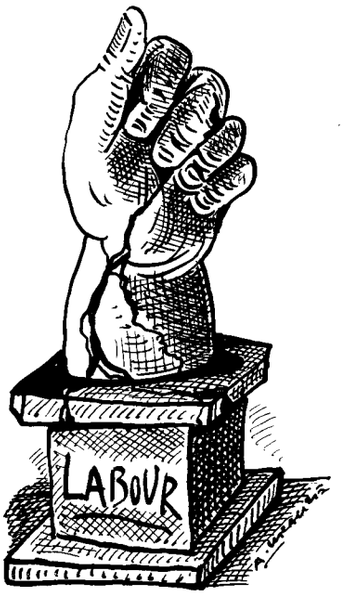

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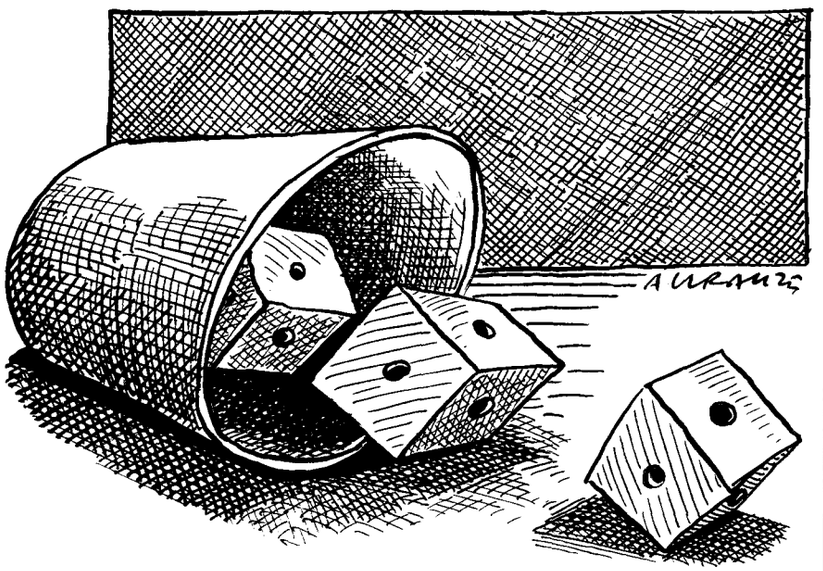
The good life

Kinnock's recent speeches still don't recognise that Labour must commit itself to a democratic agenda



Two major speeches by Neil Kinnock—the first, his "no favours" address to the TUC, the second, his opening speech in the Commons debate on the Gulf crisis—have won the Labour leader plaudits in the most unlikely quarters. Both were powerful performances and will have done Kinnock and his party good as the political season opens.

Both speeches reinforced what looks like a new two-party consensus, founded inevitably on what Mrs Thatcher has accomplished since 1979. The Labour Party has progressively narrowed its policy differences with the Tories on a series of major issues—for example, trade union reform, defence, the market economy, taxation—and the thrust of Kinnock's two speeches—independence from the trade unions, no appeasement abroad—echoed Mrs Thatcher's own agenda. It would be a mistake to make too much of this convergence; this isn't "Thatchockism" in the making. But Labour has to demonstrate that it stands for more than a rather more humane and sensible version of Thatcherism.

This week, Eric Hobsbawm and Anthony Wright open a series of articles on the future of socialism. Wright's thoughtful article argues the case for a Big Idea to make sense of all Labour's sensible little ideas and goes for the idea of community. But as you read Wright you realise that the idea of community pulls together all the other contenders for the Big Idea title: democracy, equality, freedom, and so on; and that any one of these ideas, once given the lead, would probably perform a similar function.

What's wrong with Labour, then, may not be that it has failed to come up with a Big Idea, but that its strategy is dictated not by positive ideas which then make sense of the whole, but by a defensive posture and tactical expediency which downgrades its own commitment to creating a good society. On this analysis, the party could probably use any of its historic themes to give direction to strategy and policy-making. The point is that individual policies—even important commitments like the increase in child benefit or the introduction of a national minimum wage—have to be presented in the context of reforming ideals.

This doesn't mean that Labour's present position is convincing. Strangely, Kinnock's two speeches were delivered on occasions which showed up significant weaknesses. At the TUC, Kinnock did promise to adopt the European social charter, with its emphasis on rights at work. But he failed to develop the idea and promise political, civil and social rights, too: a pledge that would make Labour's appeal far more universal. Moreover, a very important Big Idea was going begging at Blackpool, as Molly Meacher's political column argues (page 6). Important trade unionists are coming to recognise the need for an incomes policy. Molly Meacher warns that, without some wage-setting strategy, Labour in office would be powerless to stop mass unemployment. Actually, it would be unable to carry out any of its pledges. Talk of national economic assessments may be the only way to crank up this debate; but unless Labour works hard to make this a public argument, no incomes policy strong enough to sustain a Labour government will emerge in time.

Labour's handling of the Gulf crisis has throughout revealed the other weakness: Labour's indifference to democracy. Here Labour is not only at one with the Tories, but with British political culture as a whole. Neil Kinnock and Gerald Kaufman could very well have taken the strong line they did on Iraq, and still demanded the recall of parliament. Indeed, since Labour was well ahead of the Tories in appreciating the need to work within the parameters of what was acceptable to the United Nations, the party may well have gained more from open debate of the issue earlier than last week. But it was consumed by the fear of looking unpatriotic and letting Tony Benn and "the awkward squad" off the lead. But while we believe that Benn is mistaken on the central issue, what he had to say remains significant; and, as an elected representative, his right to say it in the country's debating chamber ought not to have been denied by nice calculations of party advantage.

The trouble is that Labour can't readily adopt the democratic agenda because it doesn't, in its bones, believe in it. It is still beguiled by all the nonsense about "strong" government, even after 11 hard years' experience of the damage that "strong" government can do to the social fabric and well-being of the nation. As Anthony Wright shows, this indifference towards democracy is historic. But if Labour can't conquer it, and soon, then its chances of replacing Thatcherism with Kinnockism are going to diminish, not grow, over the next year.

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Rights issues

In 1922 (Bruce Chatwin recounts), a Texan adventurer in Patagonia announced exciting news: he had sighted a living "plesiosaurus"—a small dinosaur. Plesiosaurus fever swept Argentina. Societies were formed and subscriptions were raised to sponsor an expedition that would trap the animal and study its habits. Political parties of both left and right claimed the plesiosaurus as their emblem. The project ended in failure, when it ultimately became clear that the beast under advertisement did not exist.

A similar process is under way here over the notion of "citizenship". The *New Statesman* was among the first to promote the concept, but the term was quickly appropriated by wettish Tories, who added the word "active" and used it as a covert way of criticising Thatcherism. In 1988, an all-party commission under the patronage of the Speaker of the House of Commons was established "to look at ways in which citizens can participate most fully and effectively in society". This week it produced a weighty report, examining citizenship from many angles, urging that it be taught in schools, and that citizens' rights be codified. What it does not consider is whether citizenship actually *exists* in Britain.

For the commission, citizenship means, roughly, a sense of belonging to a community, good-samaritanism, plus limits on the power of those in authority—what it calls a "traditional British analysis, which seems to match British perceptions". This magazine's project is to promote something rather more radical: a concept that legitimises authority in the first place. The British state is constructed downwards: monarch to government to parliament to subjects. Instead, it should be constructed upwards, starting with a foundation of citizens who have certain inalienable rights—an essentially republican approach. The fact that the commission does not consider a written constitution or a bill of rights demonstrates the fundamental conservatism of its thinking.

Mr Speaker and his worthies have wasted two years. The point is not to review citizenship, codify it, teach it, or reward it, but to *create* it.

Screen tests

Ever since Columbus's sailors brought syphilis from the New World to the Old, people have been worrying about American imports. The latest jeremiad has emerged from the Policy Studies Institute in the form of *Cultural Trends number six*. British cinema is being dominated by the product of America. Andrew Feist, a researcher at the institute, observed that there were disturbing features in the report, "and one is the dominance of American culture".

So what else is new? In the 1930s, the British government was so alarmed by Hollywood's commercial hegemony that a law was passed instituting a minimum quota of British films that had to be screened in domestic cinemas. The result was not a renaissance of the British industry but a dreadful series of what were known as "quota quickies", cheap rubbish made with the sole purpose of meeting legal requirements.

We should be the last country to restrict cultural free trade. In pop music, Britain has exercised an influence out of all proportion to its size. America will always dominate the film industry. Nor can governments legislate to make audiences prefer George Formby to Charlie Chaplin.

The genuinely worrying statistic is the one showing a total investment in film production of £137 million in 1989 compared with £300 million three years earlier. This is partly the result of bad films and incompetent management, but it is also the result of a government withdrawal of funds.

Those who believe we can make films to oust American influence are not so much reviving the Ealing comedy as living in one. What we can do is nurture a carefully controlled industry that can produce, on a relatively small scale, distinctively British subject matter while also furnishing the studio facilities for the distinctively American films that we should be encouraging rather than sneering at. After all, those are the films we all vote for with our admission fees.

Spot the difference

What is the Labour Party playing at? A half-way competent Opposition would have seized the twin opportunities presented by a government with one of the worst environmental records in Europe, together with an electorate that worries about greenery. But while Mrs Thatcher has made five major speeches on the environment, Neil Kinnock has so far made none. In the next few weeks, the government is bringing out its white paper on the environment. It is widely expected to be a watered-down version of what Chris Patten originally promised us would be the green "Beveridge of the 1990s". Having lost a number of departmental battles, he is now reduced to saying it will "open the windows" of Whitehall to environmental thinking.

This is the moment for Labour to gain brownie points. Both it and the Liberal Democrats are launching their own alternative green statements to coincide with the government's white paper. But while the LDs commit themselves to meeting all energy requirements from renewable sources within 50 years, Labour, like the Tories, has produced a document which eschews carbon taxes and contains little new except a proposal to consider green courts.

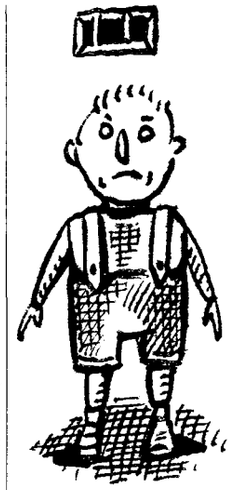
When it comes to the greenhouse effect, the difference between Labour and Tory policies is again negligible. Mrs Thatcher has offered to stabilise Britain's carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2005. Climatologists think that the *minimum* first step over the same period is a 30 per cent reduction. Labour's risible response will be to suggest stabilising emissions five years earlier. The choice, for the green elector, remains between bad and worse.

Expediency first

The British establishment's philistine indifference to freedom of speech has been starkly revealed by the fumbling and prejudiced reaction to the Rushdie affair of both the political and literary classes. Now it's the turn of Britain's diplomats to put expediency first.

The EC has been seeking to normalise relations with Iran since May, and no doubt the Gulf crisis has given added impetus to the talks. Sources in Brussels indicate that formal exchanges between the EC and Iran will be confined to declarations of respect for religion and international law, but officials have expressed the hope that the *fatwa* (the death sentence on Rushdie) would then be lifted.

Douglas Hurd, on his Arabian travels, also called for an end to the *fatwa*. But the Foreign Office now seems to be about to bowl a nasty-looking googly. Apparently, Britain may now be willing to regard the *fatwa* as a religious matter that need not affect diplomatic relations with Iran. And Hurd does not appear to be insisting that the reward offered by Khomeini for Rushdie's murder be rescinded. He is under tremendous pressure to do a quick deal—not least to secure the release of the Lebanon hostages. But too easy a bargain could scupper Rushdie's chances of freedom for ever.



This week the tabloid newspapers reported a shocking new case of child abuse. It concerns an eight-year-old boy removed from his parents and forced to undergo ten years of physical hardship, ritual humiliation and emotional deprivation. Yes, Prince William is going away to boarding school. He will emerge with an intimate understanding of an education system most of his future subjects know nothing of, and hardened to a suffering he will never again experience. By this method we will produce a monarch fit for the brave new world of the nineteenth century

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POLITICAL COLUMN

Pain threshold

Unless we change our ways, ERM entry means mass unemployment in Britain

Those who are paid to watch John Major's lips now expect Britain to join the European exchange rate mechanism in November. This will, we are told, put an end to Britain's stagflation problems. The discipline of the ERM will pull Britain into line with our competitors and take control of inflation. Fine words, but what does all this mean in practice? Unless we change our ways, the answer is painfully simple—mass unemployment.

Molly Meacher

Britain hasn't joined the ERM before now because our inflation rate has run higher than that of the rest of Europe. Governments have wanted the freedom to devalue the pound in order to compensate for that inflation. This is Britain's traditional way of dealing with our chronic incapacity to organise our affairs in a way that would ensure that wages rise in line with productivity. Instead, employers have competed for labour by bidding up wages and the trade unions have understandably been happy to go along. The spread of wage negotiations throughout the year has contributed to the chaos. Wages and prices have leapfrogged upwards. No one has benefited, least of all the two to three million people who have been unemployed for months, if not years, during the 1980s.

If Britain does finally go in, we will not be able to continue our endless and destructive round of inflation and depreciation. Our traditional wage-setting habits will pile up an enormous trade deficit. The EC will refuse to finance that deficit with loans unless we adopt "responsible economic policies". We all know what that will mean. Deflation and more deflation until imports fall into line with exports, and, more particularly, until British prices match those of our competitors. That inflation, of course, also means unemployment for millions of people who have not necessarily played any part in the inflationary process.

What then is Britain to do to adjust to the harsh realities of the ERM? There is a solution which neither the Conservatives nor Labour, both of whom want to kiss the rod of the ERM, will contemplate. The general secretary of a major trade union admitted (privately) to me last week that this solution was obvious: a good, honest incomes policy. But Labour leaders quiver in their shoes at such a thought. Indeed, a senior Labour politician involved in the 1970s statutory incomes policy said he and his colleagues were "engraved on the forehead with a deep incomes policy cross". He added: "None of us could contemplate a return to those days."

Mrs Thatcher has her own brand of incomes policy. It involves holding the line on public sector pay while leaving private sector wages to the vagaries of the market. For anyone entirely unconcerned about justice, poverty or the quality of public service, this is probably the best "off-the-peg" solution. No ingenuity or inventiveness is required. Let the poor take the rap—it leaves a comfortable majority that will be happy enough to return a Conservative government at the next election.

The left understands the need for a wage-setting strategy, but Labour leaders want to avoid the crossfire

But the Labour Party can't possibly adopt this kind of option. Which leaves it with an agonising dilemma. It has to have a convincing answer to the post-entry scenario, and not simply for the purposes of winning the next election. Neil Kinnock knows that he cannot hide in Number 10 Downing Street as the unemployment figures soar through two and then two-and-a-half million towards the three-million mark.

The TUC last week made a bold offer that could rescue the Labour Party, but more importantly Britain, from the worst effects of the ERM. John Edmonds, Alan Tuffin and Clive Brooke advocated the coordination of wage negotiations to avoid the wage leapfrogging of the past. Their motion, though thoroughly contorted in the compositing process, was nevertheless passed. It would be wrong to suppose that the trade unions aren't divided on the issue, or to assume that an incomes policy is to be had for the asking. And, of course, it will take more than the commitment of the trade union movement to transform Britain's capacity to compete abroad and thus to create sufficient jobs for everyone. Employers, too, must accept that the ERM, wage-setting and their ability to export are intimately intertwined.

Why do I believe that coordinated bargaining is the primary solution to Britain's inflation and unemployment problems, both now and more particularly within the ERM? Just look at the world's successful economies: Japan, West Germany, the Netherlands, Australia and Sweden. The single common feature of them all is some form of coordinated bargaining.

Nevertheless, all the evidence in the world—plus the conviction that it is both necessary and socially just—does not mean that it would be easy to introduce coordinated wage bargaining to Britain. It would require three radical changes in Britain's political and industrial culture. First, employers and workers would have to understand and accept the link between wages, trade deficits, exports and unemployment. Government would have to develop an open approach to national policy formation. Employers and unions would have to accept some fundamental changes to their traditional wage-setting habits. A more open and democratic means of establishing a "national economic assessment" would have to be found to set the framework for informed debate about the "going rate" for a year's wage round. Smoke-filled rooms and rigid government norms would be out.

I am convinced by discussions over the past year with Labour leaders, trade unionists, employers and civil servants that there is considerable understanding on the left of the need for a form of coordinated bargaining, and a willingness to discuss how this might be achieved. Understandably, though, Labour leaders want to avoid crossfire as the debate develops, allegations about a return to a statutory incomes policy are rebuffed, misunderstandings sorted out. So they are keeping their heads down.

But there's no time to lose. With ERM entry imminent and a general election likely within a year, the details of an appropriate wage-setting strategy have to be set in place. Otherwise, an incoming Labour government may find itself directly responsible for an unemployment rate of three million people.

Molly Meacher is director of the Campaign for Work, "Stagflation: lessons from other places" and "Pay and Full Employment" are available from CFW, Annex B, Tottenham Town Hall, London N15 4RX at £4 each.

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TAKING LIBERTIES

Jolyon Jenkins

"The Russians really *are* coming," says Nikolai Semiderkin, professor of law at Moscow university. Nikolai is the epitome of New Soviet Man (a style pioneered by Genady Gerasimov): open, twinkly, and with a total mastery of the art of the three-second soundbite.

He was speaking at a conference last week in the Netherlands on migration and penal reform. His thesis was alarming (and alarmist). The Soviet parliament is about to pass a law later this year allowing all USSR citizens to leave the country for up to three years. The result, he said, would be a "new migration wave overflowing into the west"—and with it, an upsurge in crimes of violence.

Since 1985, he said, the number of people leaving the Soviet Union had doubled each year. This year it was likely to be about half a million. Tens of thousands of Soviet Germans were heading for Germany, Soviet Greeks for Greece, Jews for Israel and Armenians for America. With the legal constraints removed, the outflows would increase ever faster.

Those migrating, he said, would have psychological problems adjusting to new values and ways of life. One only had to look at what had happened *within* the USSR since restrictions on internal movement were relaxed to see the possible results. For example: 40,000 Tartars in internal exile since the end of the second world war were now returning to the Crimea—and the crime rate there had increased by 400 per cent.

I'm sceptical about the idea that the west is about to be ravaged by hordes of latter-day Ostrogoths and Slavs sweeping down from the steppes. The USSR may be willing to let its citizens out, but it's naïve to think that the west will want to let them all in. It's far more likely that the Soviet Union will find itself in a similar position to Hong Kong, with the west buying up its highly qualified but underpaid scientists and professionals, but rejecting Nikolai's criminal *lumpenproletariat*. I'm also sceptical that the official Soviet statistics on the crime rate are at all meaningful, particularly since they still include such crimes as "profiteering"—selling something for more than you bought it.

And yet... the famous "pressure to emigrate", which the British Home Office always invokes to justify its restrictive immigration policy, will surely be just as strong for the poor of the eastern bloc as it is for their counterparts in the Indian subcontinent. As Sarah Baxter has reported (*NSS*, 24 August), the casual workers picking strawberries in Kent this year are Polish and Czech students. Moscow is a good deal nearer than Madras. And eastern Europeans are *white*, and therefore less easy to detect. I should be surprised if a civil servant in the Home Office isn't drawing up a discussion paper taking a very similar line to Nikolai Semiderkin's.

Even the liberal Dutch are starting to make explicit, and rather unpleasant, links between criminality and eastern migration. They have started locking up Polish and Romanian would-be refugees. And part of the future prison capacity of the Netherlands has already been reserved for young migrants without work.

The new Europe will mean freedom of movement for goods, capital, and white businessmen. I rather doubt that it will usher in a similarly relaxed era for ordinary citizens.

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DIARY

Sean French

I doubt that anything has damaged P G Wodehouse's reputation as severely in the long term as George Orwell's essay about him. It was called "In Defence of P G Wodehouse" but, in the course of defending the author against his violent detractors (and one must remember that he was writing in the last year of the war when MPs were calling for Wodehouse—who had broadcast on German radio while interned—to be charged with treason), Orwell conceded so much that Wodehouse was left a ludicrous figure, a political imbecile living in a bygone age.

As the publication this week of Wodehouse's letters (edited by Frances Donaldson, published by Hutchinson) shows, the essay is by turns brilliantly perceptive and plain wrong. Orwell linked Wodehouse with the English who simply had not noticed the pre-war threat: "Abyssinia, Spain, China, Austria, Czechoslovakia—the long series of crimes and aggressions had simply slid past their consciousness or were dimly noted as quarrels occurring among foreigners and 'not our business'."

This is certainly confirmed by Wodehouse's fatuous comment in the new collection, "I can't imagine anything safer than being in an Italo-Abyssinian war", a somewhat inadequate response to a conflict in which poison-gas attacks on civilians played a major role.

But Orwell also asserted that there were "no post-1918 tendencies at all... Nowhere, so far as I know, does he so much as use the word 'Fascism' or 'Nazism'." This seems to have been accepted uncritically by later commentators. John Carey, a professor of English literature, observed in his review of the letters in last week's *Sunday Times*: "It would be impossible, in Wodehouse's style, to treat passion, politics, natural beauty, religion, or any serious living issue."

Carey presumably hasn't read one of Wodehouse's most celebrated novels, *The Code of the Woosters*, written in 1937. Early in the book, Bertie Wooster is told by Augustus Fink-Nottle that his antagonist, Sir Roderick Spode, is "the founder and head of the Saviours of Britain, a Fascist organization better known as the Black Shorts."

Wooster responds: "Well, I'm dashed! I thought he was something of that sort. That chin... Those eyes... And, for the matter of that, that mustache. By the way, when you say 'shorts', you mean 'shirts', of course."

"No. By the time Spode formed his association, there were no shirts left. He and his adherents wear black shorts."

"Footer bags, you mean?"

"Yes."

"How perfectly foul."

And if this mockery is not considered a sufficiently unequivocal condemnation, Wooster later rounds on Spode directly:

"The trouble with you, Spode, is that just because you have succeeded in inducing a handful of half-wits to disfigure the London scene by going about in black shorts, you think you're someone. You hear them shouting 'Heil, Spode!' and you imagine it is the Voice of the People. That is where you make your bloomer. What the Voice of the People is saying is: 'Look at that frightful ass Spode swanking about in footer bags! Did you ever in your puff see such a perfect perisher?'"

Written at the height of appeasement, these passages must have been considered pretty right on, yet expressed in the author's most characteristic style. You don't have to write like Robert Tressell to be political.

I've spent much of this week filling out multiple entries for the *NSS* readers' questionnaire. It's amazing how long it takes even when only filling out the bits that establish the respondent as rich and desirable for advertisers as well as a devoted, nay fanatical, reader of the wise, witty and yet strangely moving diary.

Fortunately, on occasions like this, I can rely on readers to write the column for me. It never ceases to dismay me how much more than me readers know about any subject I write about. A few weeks ago I rashly wondered in print whether the phrase "some desperate glory", used by *Sunday Times* commentator Norman Macrae about the Falklands, came from a hymn. I've been leading you astray again. Thank you to those readers who wrote pointing out that it was from Wilfred Owen's famous poem, *Dulce et Decorum Est*: "...My friend, you would not tell with such high zest,/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est/Pro patria mori."

And I am grateful (a phrase that is generally used, as here, when one is deeply resentful) for a critique from Professor Walter Nash of Nottingham University, who observes that the phrase "a wilderness of mirrors" was not, as I had said, coined to describe the world of espionage but borrowed from T S Eliot's *Gerontion*.

Nash is a professor of modern English language and he takes issue with what I had said about dictionaries failing to deal with language as actually used. He rightly points out that, contrary to my assertion, made—as a lexicographer once said of an erroneous entry—out of pure ignorance, most dictionaries give *literally* a secondary meaning of something like *virtually* (thus making it one of those rare words, such as *infer*, that can be used literally, that is, literally literally, in opposite senses).

He also comments that almost all dictionaries he consulted identified "with respect" as a phrase "used formally to introduce expressions of disagreement". But that is to miss my point, which was that, as used, it introduces not respectful disagreement but disrespectful abuse. I find it impossible to imagine a situation in which the phrase would not appear insolent, insulting or contemptuously pedantic. It is these nuances that dictionaries find so difficult to pin down—and foreigners to learn. The only people I could imagine saying "with respect" with respect are those with a shaky grasp of the language. It reminds me of the injunction during national service that sergeants were supposed to give to officers they were training: "You call me *sir* and I call you *sir*. The difference is, you mean it."

Incidentally, Professor Nash contributed a neat example of his own: "in my experience—it usually means that the speaker knows nothing and is full of motiveless prejudice." He also concluded his letter with an almost 18th-century elegance: "Consider me, not literally, but with the greatest respect, Yours." But after reading his elucidatory letter, I now have no confidence in knowing what he means.

ROGER WODDIS

Brave music, distant drums

Mark Elder has been sacked from the last night of the Proms for refusing to conduct jingoistic songs during the Gulf crisis

Land of Hope and Glory,
Mother of the Free,
How shall we extol soldiers
Sent across the sea?
Sailors nurtured on Nelson,
Lovely lads dropping bombs,
Can't compare with the people
Queuing for the Proms.

Singing *Rule, Britannia*
Stirs the coldest heart;
Men who march together
Soon are blown apart.
God who made thee mighty,
Make thee mightier yet;
Medal-winners remember,
Music-lovers forget.

Stamp your feet *fortemente*,
Wave those Union Jacks;
Promenaders sing jingo,
Elder leans towards *pax*.
Elgar rouses John Drummond,
Parry means a packed hall;
Troops who may have been summoned
Tend to sing *Fuck 'em all.*

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11.15 9.15 PETE McCARTHY THE HANGOVER SHOW PERRIER AWARD NOMINEE
WENDY HARMER LOVE GONE WRONG AUSTRALIAN MEGASTAR
WEEK 2 (1/6 OCT) 7pm COMMUNICADO THEATRE CO. DANTON'S DEATH PRUDENTIAL AWARD WINNER
11.15 9.30 SEAN HUGHES A ONE NIGHT STAND PERRIER AWARD WINNER
THIRTYSOMEHOW JULIE BALLOO, MARIA CALLOUS, JENNY ECLAIR
WEEK 3 (8/13 OCT) 7.15 HULL TRUCK SWEET SORROW BY ALAN PLATER LONDON PREMIERE
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Up and doing

Carol Lake, award-winning novelist, recounts a true story of Jennifer and Glen, of prison and a child

Let's go back three springs. There is a fête and pageant in the park. We've had the band, the cake-stalls, jumble, competitions; in the lime avenue the morris-dancers clash their boots. I bump into Shirley, who has left her children at the Scouts' stall having their faces made up.

"Come on, let's go and see our Jennifer. She lives near here." "God no, Shirley, she'll be mad if we just turn up on her on a Sunday afternoon. They'll probably be in bed." "Then it's time they got up," she laughs. "She won't mind. I'm going, anyway." We saunter out of the park, to where Jennifer, Shirley's daughter, lives with her boyfriend, Glen.

After the bright afternoon, the house seems dark. A tumble of clothes drapes over the furniture. Jennifer, very affable, hurries downstairs to make us a cup of tea. Glen looks less than pleased to have his girlfriend's mother and company disturb their Sunday peace. He looks outnumbered, and if you ask him anything he says Yes or No. Fred and Fluffy, the cats, are shown off and admired, Jennifer's collection of mirrors exclaimed over, the house alterations examined, the garden peered at through the window.

We stroll back to the fête. "I don't know—they seem all right together. It's working out. Glen wants her to have a baby, but Jennifer keeps putting him off, she doesn't feel ready just yet. I don't think they'll be long, though."

Fred and Fluffy, the cats, are shown off and admired, Jennifer's collection of mirrors exclaimed over

Throughout the preceding winter Glen had often been there when I'd called round—he'd been waiting for Jennifer, or mending door locks, or hanging wallpaper. He had carefully blocked out his name, GLEN FITCHETT—Plumbing House Decoration Odd Jobs, and then taken the sheet of paper to the library copy machine to produce letter-headed sheets. As an attempt to get out of long-term unemployment, I was impressed by this. Jim, Shirley's husband, left Glen and Jennifer in charge of the pub, while he had a long-overdue week's holiday. Jennifer was suddenly up and doing, after long-term unemployment herself: she polished up the brass door-handles and the bell that rang Time. "Oh God," said Shirley when I'd called round, "let's get out of here—look I've just dropped my ash on the floor and our Jennifer's getting so finicky, I'll get told off if she sees it."

See another picture, while waiting by the bus-stop at night: Jennifer, all dressed up and shiny, and Glen. They smile and wave, and there is something faintly old-fashioned about the way he walks by her side, carrying her rolled umbrella. They pass into the noisy Rosehill summer night.

We didn't meet that autumn, except for hurried waves, which is quite usual because in autumn everybody is busy, and Shirley and Jennifer always start an evening class. Usually Jennifer, who does the work quite easily, has jacked it in before the end of term, while Shirley, for whom the work is much harder, is still battling on. "She just gives up suddenly for no reason. She's got no confidence and she gets bored easily. I think it's with not having a job."

"I'll come round when I can," Shirley called across the road, "I've got my mother bad now, she doesn't know where she is—I don't think she'll be able to go home."

In December the local paper had a small article: "Glen Fitchett was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for stealing a video and her husband's war-medals from a widow. The judge said it was a despicable act, and although no damage had been done to property and there was no violence, he felt a longer sentence was appropriate."

Come Christmas, when we usually met, I'd got flu, and it was early February before I went round. "My mother's still not well. She can't be left on her own, she doesn't know where she is. Come and see her, anyway," said Shirley.

Mrs Jackson sat by the fire, her memory almost completely gone. On the other side of the fire, in a brown smock, sat a very pregnant Jennifer, hugging the cat. Shirley's mother was fostered out for the duration of her childhood, and spent all her working life as a nurse. She peered out from her chair, uncomprehending. "Come into the kitchen, I'll make us some coffee." Shirley plugs in the kettle. "Glen's in prison, you know." "Yes. What happened?" "Well it was absolutely daft. He had a cheque from Jim for £100 in his pocket when he broke into that house, for work that he'd done for him. So it wasn't even necessary. But somebody had broken into their place and stolen their video, and that made Glen mad—he went straight out, determined to do the same to somebody else. I think she's better off without him, but it's nothing to do with me. She's writing letters to him. That's probably what she's gone off to do now."

"Three years seems a long time, when there was no violence." "Yes, it does. It's his second offence, though. We weren't going to say anything, but it's out now. He's not had an easy life and Jim was all for giving him a chance. But you see, what's making Jennifer mad—she's up and down, she wants him one minute and she doesn't the next—is that it was Glen who wanted the baby, and then as soon as she got pregnant, he went and did this. She says she doesn't want to keep the baby." "Oh Shirley, she'll change her mind." "No, I don't think she will. We'll have to see, anyway."

"It makes me cross—the social-worker is putting pressure on her to keep the baby. She keeps on at her—have you chosen a name yet? Jennifer doesn't want to choose a name because of making it harder to part with the baby, but this is all part of this new policy of pressurising them to keep their babies. If I say anything, I'm in the wrong. Last time she

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came, the social worker turned round to me and said 'I want to speak to Jennifer about it, and you keep out of it.' So there—I'm in the wrong. But I know her. And they won't get anything out of our Jennifer. I'm just waiting to see what she does, I've not got anything for the baby because that would be putting pressure on her. It makes me mad, though, when I think he's not lifted a finger, but if she decides to keep the baby, she'll get a council house just like that, and then he'll come out of prison with everything laid on, and all he's done is get my daughter pregnant. When I think how hard it was for my mam, bringing me up—she got nothing from the state whatsoever. And for me—I had a real struggle. Anyway, we went to see a flat, but all Jennifer would say was 'I'll think about it.' You can't get anything out of her."

As we sat there, I could see the new wicker clothes basket which Jennifer had bought that week, perfect to use for a new baby. Even now, in spite of the total absence of babyclothes and equipment, perhaps she still had not definitely made up her mind.

Jennifer had the baby on a Monday evening in April (1988). By Tuesday midday she had discharged herself from hospital, never having seen the baby. She named her, afterwards saying she had done so because of coercion from the social worker, according to Shirley. On Tuesday afternoon she went into town, shopping.

Shirley bubbles one way, then another. "Me and Jim went to see her. She looks a dear little thing, she was laughing at us, I could have just brought her home. Jim says, 'Now you know, Shirley, if you want to bring that baby back here, you're welcome to bring her.' He's very good, like that. But I don't know what to do for the best. There's my mam. She's worked hard all her life and I'm not just shunting her off into a home now. If I bring the baby home, it's not really very fair on our Jennifer. I musn't expect her to babysit, when she's made it clear she wants to be free of it. But then—*has* she made it clear? The day after she'd had the baby she went into town and she came back with a bag full of...of...of rubbish. that's all I can describe it as—nothing for the baby. Glen is still wanting to keep the baby. He phoned up from prison the day she was born. He seems very concerned. I said to him, 'Jennifer wants to go through with the adoption,' and he said, 'Well I'm still hoping she'll change her mind.' It would have made a difference to her if he'd been here."

After six weeks Jennifer had to make up her mind about the adoption. She signed the forms, and was warned it would be more difficult to have the baby back, but not yet impossible. The final decision would have to be made later. "Has the baby definitely gone for adoption?" "Yes," said Shirley. "I think", she says, "that that baby will have absolutely the best of everything. I think she'll be snapped up because she's just what everybody wants—a new baby, and girls are more popular. I know it's hard, but I just don't see how our Jennifer's going to cope. She's got no confidence at the best of times. I said to her the other night, 'When she's got to her teens she might come looking for you. There's all these new laws now.' There again—she might not. It's a shot in the dark. But it's something that just might happen. Anyway, that's it, now."

We never discussed it again. That summer I saw Shirley quite a few times, but Jennifer never seemed to be around much, which was understandable. The year rolled on, and in the following January there was a knock on the door. It was a girl with a pram. "I've lost my kitten and Shirley sent me round here, she said you'd found one. Have you heard about Jennifer? The foster-mother has killed her baby. No, she hadn't been adopted, she was being fostered...."

Apparently, after three months with a foster-mother, the baby was transferred to another foster-mother, because the first foster-mother started with morning-sickness. In the autumn, the baby could not pass urine, and had to have a bag, from the hospital. The social worker visited her once a month. On 4 December the social-worker visited Jennifer and told her the foster-mother had asked them to hurry up with the adoption because she was getting attached; she told Jennifer no adoption could go through because the baby was underweight; and she also told her about the urine bag.

Christine Roche

This is according to Shirley, who says Jennifer spent a thoroughly disturbed Christmas, worrying about the baby. On 4 January she made a formal request to see the baby—the first time she had ever expressed any wish to do so. On 16 January 1989, when the baby was nine months old, the foster-mother threw her against a coffee table, fracturing her skull. She was taken to hospital and put on a respirator, but this was switched off because of the extent of the brain damage. Afterwards it came out that the foster-mother had been sexually abusing the baby for several months (the probable explanation for why the urine bag was necessary); also, that she had previously been suspected of sexually abusing a three-year-old boy. At the trial of the foster-mother the judge said no blame could be attached to the social-workers, as they had visited regularly. In November 1989, the foster-mother was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. Jennifer is still (July 1990) in a terrible state, she doesn't go out, and doesn't say much. ●

All the names in this story have been changed.

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Alistair Berg

SHOPPING

Monet talks

The genius of Monet is being repackaged in the Royal Academy shop. Gavin Weightman surveys the shelves

An elderly lady emerged from the **Monet in the '90s** exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts to experience the sudden transformation from voyeur of works of art worth millions to potential consumer of keenly priced Monet-spinners in the exhibition shop. An official Friend of the RA, she was a little bemused, and wandered around holding a small plastic box of sugar-coated almonds. They were like sea-smooth pebbles and were wrapped with blue ribbon. Monet, according to the Academy's Journal, epitomised the impressionist ideal: "the play of light, the evanescent beauty of an object glimpsed, the apparently effortless capturing of that *envelope* of atmosphere which enshrouds the visible world."

The repackaging of the genius of this painter, son of a wholesale grocer in Le Havre, for the fund-raising efforts of the Academy shop, transformed the "envelope of atmosphere" into an atmosphere of envelopes—waterlily stationery, laminated bags, and so on. The small box of sugar almonds in tasteful Monet-pastel shades of blue and pink was one of the least expensive items. What had they to do with the artist? Perhaps Monet ate these while he was painting?

Close by was Josephine Lundberg, managing director of R A Enterprises, responsible for the merchandising of Monet. "Quite possibly he did eat them—he loved his food," she said. No doubt the crumbs from Monet's table at his Giverny home would be saleable here, like the hairs of saints, Elvis Presley's socks or Anna Ford's underwear.

There are references in the exhibition shop to his garden —the flower-seed pack imported from Giverny. And to his love of food—a French Monet recipe book. But no cigarettes, though the great man had a fag in his mouth in every picture ever taken of him. Monet, low tar, filter (pink or

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blue), would go down well, as would his original dog-ends which—according to the RA Journal—the artist saved to give to a poor inhabitant of Giverny. A straw poll of visitors who emerged, dazzled, from the "series" of Monet's haystacks to the harvest of the Academy shop, revealed only mild distaste for the T-shirts, table-mats and more tolerable tat. The attitude of the Friends was rather like that of people at a village fête; you buy a bottle of beetroot wine or a hideous rug because it is all in a good cause. As Lundberg puts it: "We are retailing art appreciation."

A number of visitors accepted that the £5 entrance fee for the exhibition was very reasonable, and was subsidised by the profits from the shop. A Monet paperweight could keep the admission price down. The consumer envelope around Monet is striking, but the merchandising of exhibitions is really nothing new. The Royal Academy has had a shop for eight years, selling its own mugs and even a teddy-bear.

The Monet is very subdued compared with what the Americans, or the Dutch with their Van Gogh exhibition, get up to. Lundberg, who arrived a year ago, feels that the Academy could go in for a bit more "shelf talk"—a retailing term for the labelling of products. For example, staff and academicians all know the RA teddy-bear as Joshua, after Joshua Reynolds, the first president. But it is not called that in the shop—you have to be one of the *cognoscenti* to know.

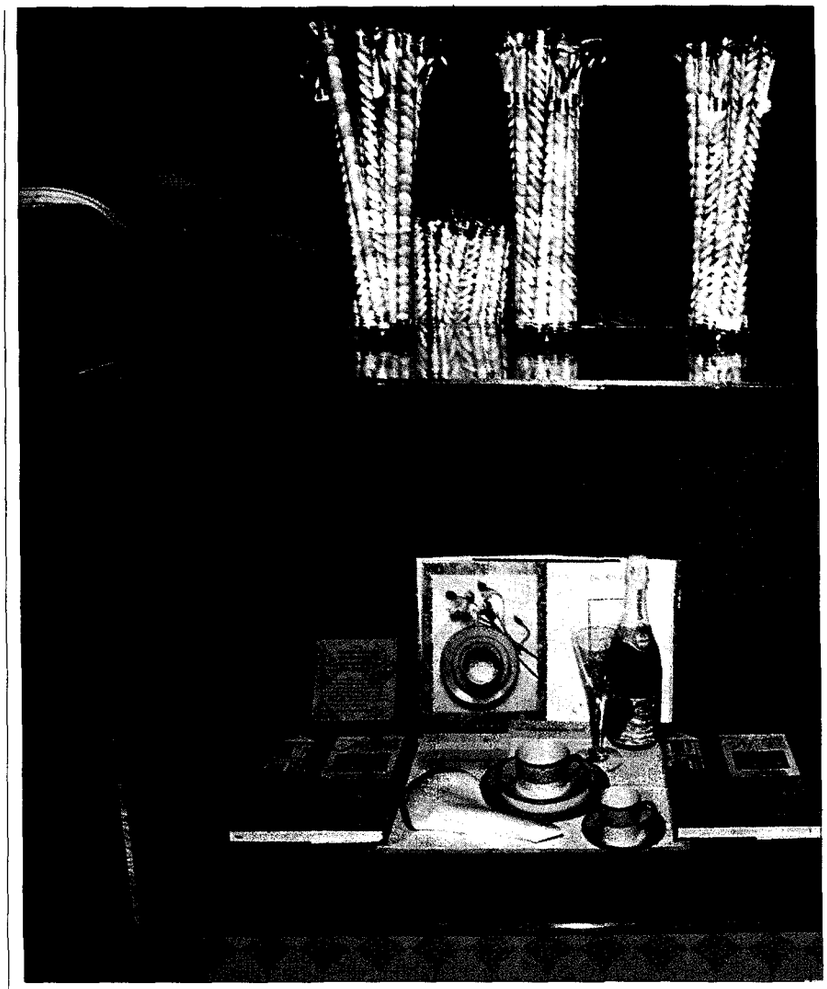
The art world is full of these subtleties. In the Monet shop, the shelf talk of the T-shirts was already too loud for some Friends. But not for Patricia Jolly. She gave them a good look over, studying not the four different designs so much as the sizes printed on the back—they were all large, Monet-sized. Jolly studied art in Dublin, and has always loved the impressionists. She thought the exhibition wonderful. Now here she was buying a souvenir. Once she had a dream that she had found a Monet in a junk shop for 7s 6d. The T-shirt, with detail of Monet's view of the Thames and Parliament was £12.95. She was buying it for a son in the army, who had been stationed in Iraq and had luckily got out a week before the invasion of Kuwait. Did he like Monet? No, she said, but: "It's time he had a bit of culture."

A white-haired lady artist from Ireland did not object in principle to any of the Monet reproductions, but disliked the quality of printing which she felt did not reflect Monet's colouring. "Paint what you see, not what you know," she advised. An Indian man felt the wrong Monets had been used for the coasters and table-mats: it should have been the waterlilies. Critical judgment of Monet merchandise was as lively as appreciation of the paintings themselves. Between a third and a half of visitors to this kind of exhibition buy something. It is a truth of the business that 90 per cent of the buyers are women. Lundberg was anxious that there should be items that would appeal to men—the table-mats, for instance, or the Victorian viewing jar.

This latter item caused most bewilderment. It caught the eye of the Friend who had the sugared almonds. What was it? A shaky hand reached out and—CRASH. A loss of £12.95, the cost borne by RA Enterprises. The Victorians used these little viewing jars, with a screw-on magnifying glass, to examine specimens they collected. The item is one of the many trinkets that have crossed the Atlantic with the Monet exhibition. In Boston and Chicago the viewing jar contained flower seeds (very Monet) but unaccountably the RA's consignment have little sea-shells. They were selling, nevertheless, as Monet mementoes.

So too are the packets of seeds imported from the Monet shrine at Giverny: a grow your own impressionist tableau kit. A Friend, taking one of these to the busy shop counter, said it was for an artist acquaintance who lived in Cornwall and was not well enough to get to the exhibition. With the Giverny seeds he could watch Monet's inspiration bloom.

Andrew Franklin, another Friend, made a gruff exit from the exhibition and pointed his walking stick at the laminated waterlily carrier bags. He was mildly disapproving: "They don't look much good as bags and they are not much good as illustrations either." But he was taken with the Limoges "Monet" china set, a replication of some crockery found in the attic at Giverny when it was being restored.



"I wouldn't mind waking up in the morning with the wife offering me a cup of tea in that, I think it's very nice—but expensive." The tea-cup and saucer, costing £66, was the slowest mover in the Monet shop. But other expensive items were selling well: the silk scarves (waterlilies £80 and irises £70) and the basil pots (at between £28.95 and £99). "We've had that for some time," a couple of Friends said of *Monet's Cookery Notebook*, a lavish production with the gourmet artist's favourite recipes.

It was produced in France long before the exhibition and the RA snapped up the remaining copies of the English translation. "The banana ice-cream is marvellous," said the visitors. The recipe begins: "At least 15 minutes before it is required, prepare a hand-cranked ice-cream-maker with crushed ice, sea-salt and a little saltpetre."

Did they have this contraption? They had disappeared into the crowded Monet shop with their impressionist plastic bag before I could ask. The people who were most cynical about the merchandising of Monet were, understandably, the young sales assistants who rang the tills in the shop.

One told the tale of a lady who had put a box of pastels on the counter and asked: "What are these?" She was told there were two sets, one for portraits and the other for landscapes. "I'll take them both," she said, after reflection, and forked out £36.95 for each delicious-looking box. The pastels resembled some kind of crunchy confectionery—Royal Academy Rock, perhaps. Had this lady misunderstood and gone away with the impression that Monet ate one kind when he was doing landscapes, and the other variety when he was engaged in a portrait? The "evanescent beauty of an object glimpsed" can be treacherous. ●

She holds a small plastic box of sugar-coated almonds in tasteful pastel shades. Perhaps Monet ate these while he was painting?

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Future tense

Celebrations after the Helsinki summit may be premature. The changed US-USSR relationship not only heralds a new global order, but a world slipping beyond the grasp of the two superpowers, says Fred Halliday

Chris Duggan

The Soviet-US agreement on the Gulf reached last weekend at Helsinki has been presented as the start of a new era of international agreement and of a new international "order". In some ways it is: this degree of Soviet-US understanding is certainly new and may contribute to bringing about a peaceful end to the Gulf crisis, with an Iraqi pullout, however disguised, from Kuwait. The Americans will enforce the embargo, the Soviets will continue with their diplomatic approaches to Baghdad.

The two leaders should meet again on 3 October, at the ceremony to mark German reunification in Berlin, and are likely to review progress to date. The novelty, and effectiveness, of this summit should not, however, be overstated.

Much has been made of the Soviet willingness to criticise Iraq, formerly an ally and one of the "states of socialist orientation" to which Moscow was linked by a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation. The break over Kuwait is, however, less of a change: Moscow's current overtures may well fall on deaf ears precisely because the two coun-

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tries have been quarrelling for a long time. There is a history of Iraqi-Soviet disagreement and Moscow's hostility to Iraq is part of a long history of Soviet criticism of radical Arab nationalism. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the USSR did not support it and cut off arms supplies for two years, until Iraq agreed to a negotiated peace with Iran.

Despite earlier inflated Iraqi claims that Soviet-Iraqi relations were a "meeting of two revolutions", the two have always viewed each other with suspicion. When Soviet forces went into Afghanistan in December 1979 on the "invitation" of Afghan communists, Saddam Hussein and his associates became alarmed that the USSR, whose frontier is only 125 miles away from Iraq, could do the same to them.

Soviet-Iraqi friction is also fuelled by disagreement on one of the central themes in the current Iraqi justification for its invasion of Kuwait, namely the importance of Arab unity. Earlier, in the 1960s and 1970s, when Egypt, Iraq and other nationalist regimes were calling for Arab unity, the USSR was one of the few states to oppose what it saw as this confusing, classless, concept. Ironically, the most famous Soviet attack on the myth of Arab unity came in the form of a denunciation of the ruler of Kuwait by then Soviet leader Khrushchev during a visit to Egypt in 1964: "There is some little ruler sitting there, an Arab of course, a Muslim... He lives the life of the rich, but he is trading in the wealth of his people. He never had any conscience and he never will have any. Will you come to terms with him on unification?" A break in Soviet-Kuwaiti diplomatic relations was just avoided: a Russian football team was sent to Kuwait to promote better understanding, and a few months later Khrushchev was ousted.

Beyond the issue of Soviet-Arab relations, however, the Helsinki summit is said to mark an improved, post-cold-war, epoch. Yet despite the continued appearance that the US and the USSR enjoy an equal relationship, the USSR is clearly less and less an equal partner. With its enormous economic, ethnic and political problems brewing, no one can be sure if Gorbachev will survive the duration of the Gulf crisis and whether Moscow will continue to be able to have any effective policy at all. This does mean that the USSR is unlikely openly to oppose any US action, and will leave to China the task of vetoing military measures proposed to the Security Council: but it also belies the image of a new post-cold-war partnership.

This is evident in differing attitudes to the UN. Well before this crisis, Gorbachev had proposed a revamping of great power cooperation in the UN, and in particular the use of the Military Staff Committee provided for in the charter and never established as a result of the outbreak of cold war. There is no enthusiasm for the Military Staff Committee in Washington and London, where it would be seen as giving a veto over the use of western forces. What the US wants, and has largely got, is Soviet diplomatic support without any multilateral control.

As important as it is for the USSR and the US to find ways of cooperating it may in the longer run be just as important for them to find ways of disagreeing, but in a reasonable manner. In the cold-war epoch, almost any issues of disagreement were presented as evidence of strategic competition and part of the current *détente* is that this is not so: the Soviets keep some military personnel in Iraq, the Americans deploy large forces near the southern frontier of the USSR, without either of these impairing the relationship.

The room for disagreement is as important as agreement itself. As is evident within the major postwar alliances, managing relations between friends is often more difficult than managing them with opponents. The Soviets found this with the Chinese and with the east European nations. The Americans found it with the French in the 1960s and are now experiencing similar problems with the Germans and the Japanese.

If the expectation of the new Soviet-US understanding is that it can only succeed if both sides agree all the time, and this means in effect if the Soviet Union agrees with the US, then it is bound to fail, amidst much recrimination.

Equally dangerous is the expectation that such understandings are going to herald a new era of international "order". The word "order" is in these circumstances itself suspect, insofar as it implies both peace between states and the stability of existing regimes, irrespective of their character. Both great powers also know that, for all their convergence, the world is more and more slipping out of their control. In part because of the end of the cold war and the controls it imposed on other states, and because of the quite separate development of new political conflicts in the world, the ability of Moscow and Washington, whether in competition or united, to control the course of events is restricted. The Gulf crisis has given them time to concert decisions: an Indo-Pakistani clash over Kashmir would give them less time to convene in Helsinki or anywhere else.

What Iraq's attack on Kuwait signifies is, in broader perspective, the development of a new international "disorder", one in which states can more and more act on their own, without international constraints, and in which social and political tensions on a class and ethnic basis are growing throughout almost all of the third world and in eastern Europe as well. In this perspective, Saddam Hussein can afford to play for time, not, as he might previously have sought to do, by using cold-war rivalries, but by taking advantage of the new room for political manoeuvre in the third world.

It may be just as important for the USSR and the US to find ways of disagreeing, but in a reasonable manner

Six weeks into the Gulf crisis, Iraq has indeed been able to buy some time and fend off the worst. Faced with the international pressure upon him, Saddam Hussein has succeeded in forestalling a quick US attack by playing three strategic cards in his hand: he has held on to western male hostages and spun out the release of women and children; he has made an abrupt peace with Iran; and he has stirred considerable support in the Arab world that threatens the stability of several regimes.

It is above all in this political field that Saddam hopes to offset the military superiority of his opponents. Economic sanctions are already taking a toll on Iraq and will do so much more in the months ahead: but Saddam may be able to get out of this crisis without losing power by withdrawing, at a moment suitable to him, from Kuwait. Those who know him say that, forced into a corner, Saddam, for all his calculation, would prefer to go down fighting rather than retreat: but the possibilities of some compromise, involving a semblance of reciprocity, remain. Few in the Arab world would insist on the al-Sabah family going back. The Saudis, if given security guarantees by the US, might pay Iraq some compensation for loss of oil revenues.

By forming an international alliance around the UN, Bush has made it more difficult for himself to attack Iraq in the near future: in the end, Saddam may just manage to cover a withdrawal from Kuwait with some demagogic twist. If he does manage to pull this off, then, whatever Bush and Gorbachev may decide in their summits, Saddam's standing in the Arab world will be enhanced. The longer-run problem, of how to contain and live with Iraq, will then remain. The Grand Old Duke of Kennebunkport will have marched his troops into the desert and out again. Saddam will have lived to fight another day. ●

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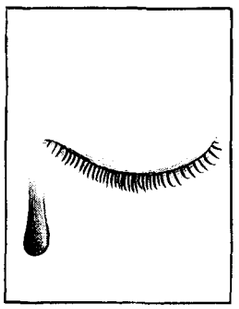
Lost horizons

Socialists have repudiated their utopian longings and beliefs at the very time they are most needed, says Eric Hobsbawm



E J Hobsbawm on global politics and Anthony Wright on domestic politics open a new series of articles on the future of socialism

1989 saw the end of what had become known in Soviet and orthodox communist circles as "really existing socialism", namely the states and economies built, with minor variations, on the original Soviet model. The phrase was both defiant and defensive. On the one hand it challenged socialists elsewhere to point to another system that had actually replaced capitalism and provided an alternative to it. On the other hand it implied that the "really existing socialism" of the Soviet bloc was not actually the socialism socialists and communists had wanted, but merely the one history had saddled them with. Whatever it was, all attempts to reform it from within, undertaken over the past 30 years, have failed. The socialism born of the October Revolution is dead.

The socialism born a century ago in the Second International has also been attenuated, but more slowly and quietly. The social-democratic parties of the developed world (for they hardly flourished outside this zone) have indeed become the parties of government or alternative government in practically all European states west of the former Soviet bloc, but nobody expects them to install socialist societies, whatever the term might mean. Once upon a time even their moderate leaders had looked forward to a completely socialist society based on the common ownership of the means of production, in the words of the British Labour Party constitution, drafted by the Fabian Sydney Webb. Very few agreed with Eduard Bernstein that "the final aim" was unimportant. Today, indeed, the term "social democracy" has been so drained of its original meaning, that new parties have been formed under that title to indicate quite specifically that they are *not* socialist, like the (fortunately short-lived) British SDP in 1983.

When the old social-democratic parties found themselves forming or taking part in governments from the first world war on, and the immediate obstacles in the way of socialism seemed insurmountable, they could still comfort themselves with the thought that a gradualist transition to socialism took time. Further steps towards the final goal would follow. In fact, as André Gorz points out, their admirable victories for public welfare, equal life-chances and social justice achieved a more humanised capitalism but not a democratic socialism. Eventually, as the social-Keynesian formula itself came under fire in the 1970s, the theoretical core of traditional socialism, reformist as well as revolutionary, was brought into question: social ownership and management.

Today few socialist parties are happy to be reminded of their historic commitment to a society based on public ownership and planning. The programme on which the British Labour Party hopes to win the next election contains a single mention of the word "socialism", and even this was inserted at a late stage as a concession to survivors of the old left. In the 1980s we find, probably for the first time in history, some nominally socialist parties whose leaders compete with Mrs Thatcher in extolling the supremacy of the market and in increasing social inequality.

Where does all this leave socialism? Cool discussion of this question is difficult amid the passionate noises emanating, on the one side, from triumphant neo-liberals and pluralist democrats, on the other, from intellectuals of the nerve-racked left, desperately seeking to save what they can of a lifetime's hopes, or relieving themselves by self-flagellation. All these sentiments are natural. For there can be no doubt that the global confrontation through which the world has lived since 1945—and some would say since 1917—has been clearly won by one side and lost by the other.

But who or what has won? Not capitalism as such (and still less the Reaganite free market), but the economy of the small minority of the global population that constitutes the "developed world". The situation of the rest of the world, which has tried the capitalist rather than the socialist road of development—and since long before 1945 or even 1917—does not encourage shouts of triumph. Even capitalism, it seems, is not a universal recipe for making nations wealthy and happy. As for liberal democracy, let us do all to make it succeed. However, let us not bet more money than we can afford to lose on the prediction that in the next generation eastern Europe will come to resemble Scandinavia. It might be a lot more like Latin America.

And who has lost? The left, and what it has lost is not reasonable belief but hope. The fall of the Soviet-type system, about which all illusion had long gone, is less significant than the apparent end of the dream of which it was the nightmare version. This was the hope "that we shall build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land" of which the poet William Blake wrote, and of which elderly British labour supporters still sing on solemn occasions.

Unlike the classical utopias, the millennium was not a set of institutional arrangements. That is why socialists gave practically no thought to what a socialist economy and society should be like, until forced to improvise suitable measures after they became governments. Their policies still bear the marks of the historical situations that gave them birth: the Soviet systems of a backward agrarian country trying desperately to catch up with the west by forced industrialisation in the era of Henry Ford, social-democratic ones of the era of the Great Slump, and both, in different ways, of the two world-war economies. Yet, whatever the details, socialism was conceived not only as a totally "new moral world" (to cite Robert Owen) but as one which would make possible the solution of the problems of the old world.

This was unlikely, but, as Max Weber wrote: "All historical experience confirms that men might not achieve the possible, if in this world they had not, time and again, reached out for the impossible." Thus the loss of this utopian hope is serious, for, in spite of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's dissent, it remains necessary. In any case it is universal in the modern world in which we live. It was built into the nineteenth century, mother of unlimited technical possibili-

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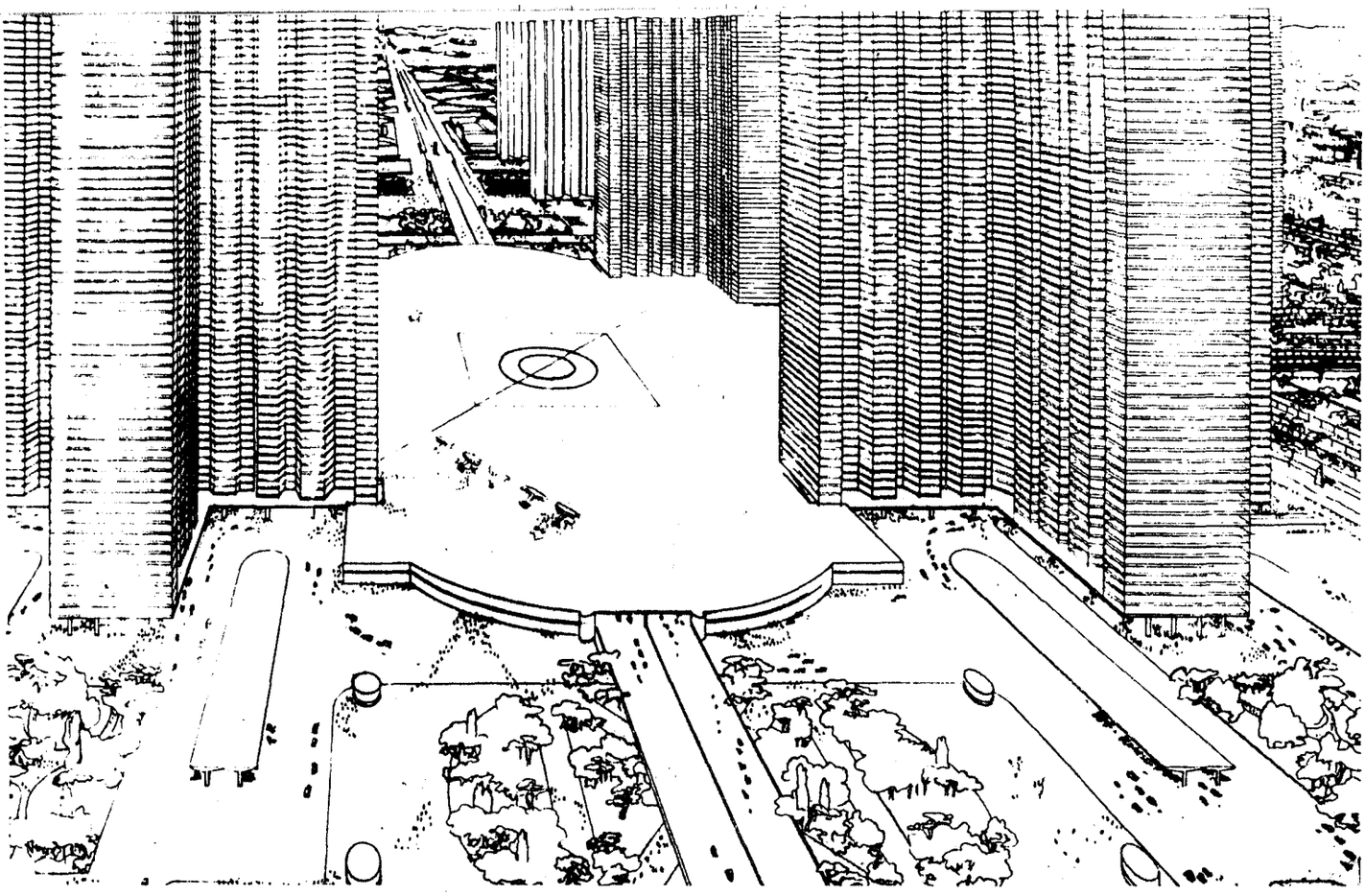

Le Corbusier's 1922 vision of a "machine age" future is glimpsed in his city for three million. This perspective shows the station, airport and adjacent office buildings

ties, endless progress, and the ideologies of liberalism and socialism which rest on both. The potential solution of all problems and the fulfilment of all wishes, ie, utopia, is the logical implication of such a world. This utopia is not necessarily socialist. The civilisation of the US, not to mention its advertising industry, continues to rest on utopian expectations, and even its political rhetoric has lately returned to the millennial vocabulary ("A City on a Hill").

Since nature abhors a vacuum of hope, the decline of the socialist vision has been replaced, not by common sense or some other relatively disenchanted form of behaviour, but by worse visions and more dangerous dreams, such as religious fundamentalism, nationalist zealotry or, more generally, that racially tinged xenophobia which looks like becoming the major mass ideology of the *fin de siècle*. All these are in their way critiques, or rather rejections, of existing society. All claim to preserve or return to, but actually imagine and invent, a community of human relations, but one defined by exclusion. All believe in or imply a society utterly changed by some great and usually sudden political transformation. In short, utopia has merely changed its flag and evacuated its intellectual contents. It has not disappeared.

What we have now are utopias without *universal* hope, sectional utopias, at a time when a world increasingly organised globally, and whose problems require global treatment, actually calls for a new universalism.

Even more damaging has been the loss of two linked beliefs central to socialist movements: the belief in the industrial working class as the historical agent of social transformation, and in the historical inevitability of its success. Both seemed highly plausible for two generations after Marx's death—so plausible that Marxism acquired enormous influence on labour and socialist parties during that period. Neither survived the dramatic economic transformations of the third quarter of the present century, although, paradoxically, the role of the proletariat as the gravedigger of the old system (in coalition with the intellectuals) has received a late confirmation in Poland, and perhaps the USSR, archaic 19th-century industrial economies constructed under Marxist-Leninist auspices.

In short, while Marx still survives remarkably well as a philosopher who interprets the world, and notably the development of capitalism, this is not true of the belief of his disciples that they know how to change it on the basis of "scientific socialism".

Meanwhile in the west, some time between the 1960s and the 1980s, roles were reversed. Capitalism recovered a sense of historical inevitability, lost in the era of crisis after 1917. It even reconstructed a confident entrepreneurial class-consciousness, although, in a situation where the sales of 200 giant corporations represent more than 25 per cent of the total GNPs of the non-socialist world, the scope for significant *private* enterprise can hardly be what it was in the days of Queen Victoria. Socialism lost both its confidence and its class-consciousnesss. The year 1989 confirmed both the recovery and the loss.

If socialists lose confidence in themselves, the problems of the uncontrolled development of capitalism will not go away

This is a situation full of irony, because the reasons for maintaining a steady scepticism about the future of the capitalist world (let alone about its neo-liberal utopias) remain compelling. The central question today is not how to reconvert the former socialist countries into market economies with varying degrees of suffering, which will doubtless be justified as usual by the need for even Adam Smith's hidden hand to break eggs when making omelettes. That is a regional problem. There are rather two global questions, which will dominate the world after 2000 and which require precisely what socialists have always regarded as indispensable: public regulation, public control, public planning and intervention in the operation of the market for purposes

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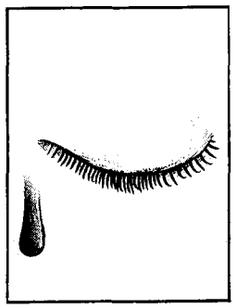

other than economic growth.

The first is the ecological crisis, which necessarily requires a major shift away from the imperatives of unlimited capital accumulation, economic growth and consumerism, as well as effective public authority, national and international. Not "sustainable growth" but infinite growth is what made capitalism what it is today. The second is the dramatically widening gap between the rich populations of the world, a diminishing minority—in 1900 the "developed countries" contained perhaps a third of the global population, today about 20 per cent—and the poor. Free market economic growth by itself has no mechanism for diminishing this explosive inequality, though within developed states (until the era of neo-liberalism) political intervention has limited inegalitarianism. Much to the benefit of western capitalist economies.

Whether they are called so or not, the policies for dealing with these problems are socialist. They may not actually inaugurate socialist societies as traditionally conceived, since the idea that such societies could, for all practical purposes, entirely eliminate market allocation of resources, has had to be abandoned. It was indeed as unworkable as the "social system based exclusively upon a network of free contracts between (legally) equal contracting parties and in which everyone is supposed to be guided by nothing but his own short-run utilitarian interest" (Schumpeter). All future economies must be mixed economies. The difference between socialist and non-socialist ones will lie in the degree to which policy in them is directed towards certain ethical objectives for society and how humans should live in it, and in their ability to counteract the dangerous consequences of uncontrolled capitalist development. It is obvious that this may, and probably will, require the use of the traditional socialist tools of policy and institutions. The real problem today is how these are to be applied to an anarchic world which, unlike states, escapes from any effective authority.

Historians in 2050 may be astonished to discover that in 1990 most socialists, so far from pointing out that the future of the globe depended on public planning and control, competed with each other in the rhetoric of the supermarket. No doubt they had electoral reasons. For though in Britain today 54 per cent of people still want "a society that emphasises social and collective provision of welfare" (as against 40 per cent who want individuals to rely on themselves), and 47 per cent prefer "a mainly socialist society in which public interest and a more controlled economy are most important" (as against 39 per cent who want "a mainly capitalist society in which private interests and free enterprise are most important"), few candidates trust the unselfishness of the voters.

We have utopias without universal hope. We have sectional utopias when the world is increasingly organised globally

However, if socialists lose confidence in themselves, the problems of the uncontrolled development of capitalism will not go away. Others will deal with them, because they will have to be dealt with. The problems of the interwar capitalist crisis were dealt with, not only by Keynesian, New Deal or social-democratic policies, but also, and in the 1930s probably more effectively, under the auspices of Nazi macroeconomic management. The world today is full of technobureaucrats with power, of ideologists rejecting rather than analysing the modern world in the name of fundamental faith and ethnic superiority, of irrationalists who only ask to be given their chance. The prospects of reason, freedom and democracy will not be good if they are. ●

Next week: Hans Magnus Enzensberger takes up the argument with his essay, "Postscript to utopia". Enzensberger, German essayist, dramatist and traveller, is author of "Europe, Europe; forays into a continent".

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SOCIALISM

Out of vision

Sensible little ideas aren't enough. Labour needs a big idea like community, argues Anthony Wright

When Churchill was leader of the Conservative opposition after 1945, he was in the habit of entertaining his shadow cabinet colleagues to fortnightly luncheons at the Savoy. On one such occasion a pudding of uncertain shape and identity was brought in. Churchill summoned the waiter: "Pray take away this pudding. It has no theme."

Much of the clever (and not-so-clever) commentary on recent Labour Party policy-making has been of this kind. It was back in September 1987 that Hugo Young's *Guardian* column—in the phrase which has come to define the debate—first identified the problem of Labour's missing Big Idea. But three years and two policy review documents later, here is R W Johnson (*NSS*, 10 August) still bemoaning the party's disabling vacuity when it comes to "the vision thing". There is much politician-speak about partnership, investment, the future and general hand-holding, but where's the theme of the new model Labour Party? Does it really matter anyway whether it has one or not?

I think it does matter, though perhaps not quite in the way it once seemed. Successful parties need to connect with the spirit of the times, reflecting it but also helping to make it (in shorthand examples: planned reconstruction and fair shares for all in 1945, setting the people free in the 1950s, modernisation and social equality in the early 1960s, anti-collectivism in the late 1970s and early 1980s). When the Thatcherite big idea was still rampant in the mid-1980s, it was plausible to suggest that only a rival big idea could enter the field against it—even though, in fact, Thatcherism had won elections rather than hearts and minds. Its ideological dominance was consequence rather than cause of its political dominance.

A perfectly serviceable set of alternative policies could always have been fashioned (by Patricia Hewitt on the back of an envelope in about five minutes), but in its crazed condition Labour had decided it would rather treat elections as a form of Russian roulette. It is worth remembering that in 1983 it was only by a whisker that Labour avoided becoming a third party. That is why it is also worth recording, against the Sneering Tendency (sometimes to be found in the *NSS*), that it is not the least of Neil Kinnock's achievements to have saved the Labour Party from itself and made it electable, a task many thought impossible.

So Labour's transformation from the Silly Nasty Party to the Sensible Nice Party is the key political fact. Having marooned itself in a bunker somewhere to the left of the

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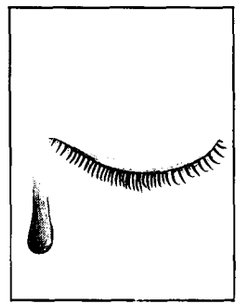
French Communist Party in the early 1980s, with the inevitable political consequences (electoral disaster, a centrist rupture, a free ride for Thatcher), Kinnock has hauled it back to a position on the centre left from which it can plausibly assemble a progressive coalition capable of winning power. This fact, at one level, counts for more than a mountain of big ideas.

Besides, it can be argued (and reportedly is argued by the keep-our-heads-down tendency within the Labour leadership) that the popular reaction against Thatcherism is also a reaction against a politics of big ideas. On this view, the last thing the British electorate now wants is a bout of ideological adventurism. It is enough for Labour to be seen as the non-Thatcherite party of sensible little ideas.

This is a persuasive argument as far as it goes, but for a whole string of reasons it won't work for very long. It won't work as soon as Labour's nightmare comes to pass (either before or after the election) and the Tories decide to trade in their failing Model T for a new H-reg Hurd or Heseltine. It won't work because the issues on every side are so big and challenging that anything less than a genuinely radical politics—what G D H Cole used to call a sensible extremism—will soon look inadequate. Keeping heads down is not an option.

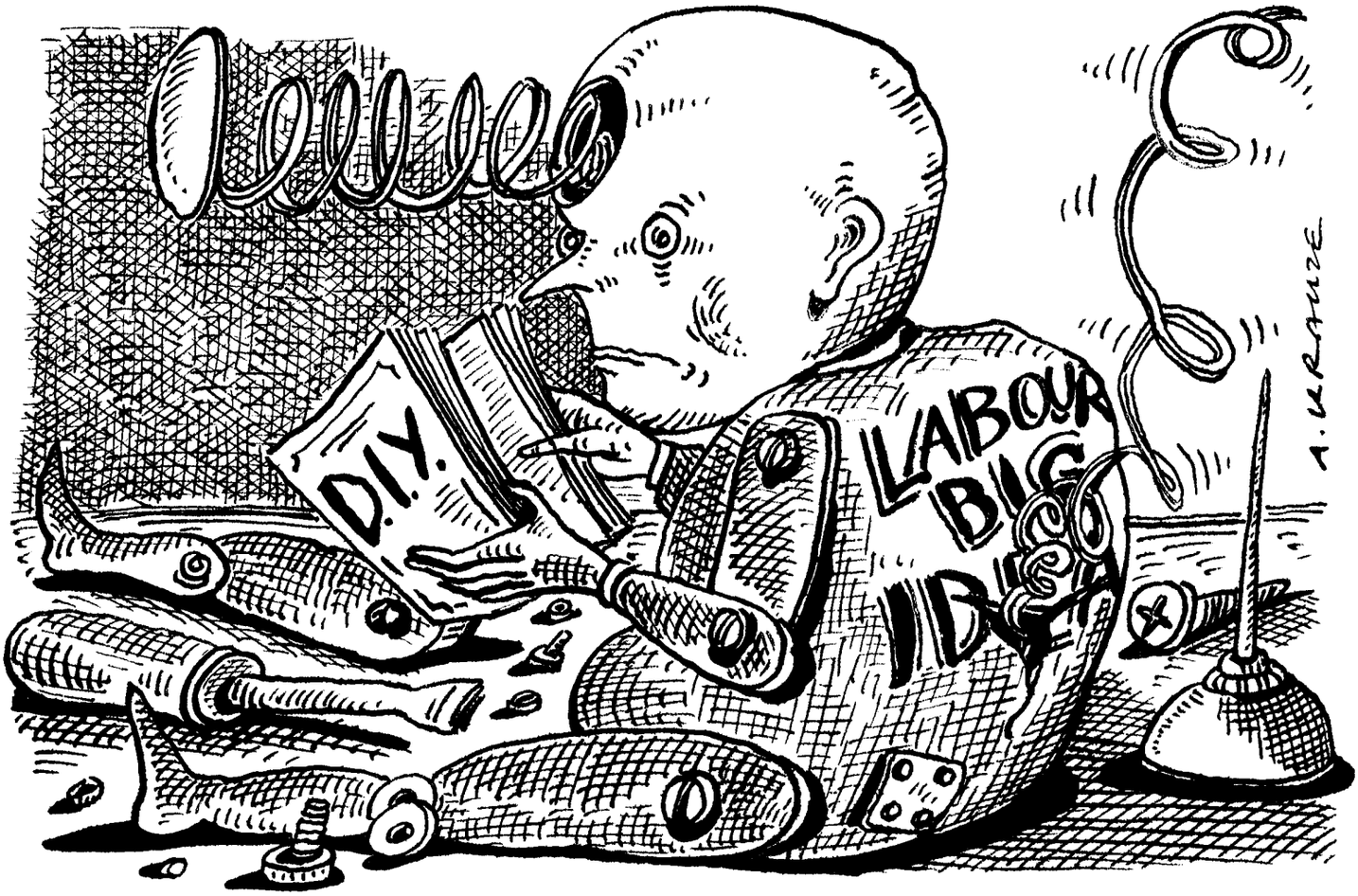
So Labour does need an organising idea, both because parties are rightly expected to have one and because they give direction and coherence to policies and programmes (or should do). In case anybody still thinks it is enough simply to insert "socialism" at this point, I would ask only where they have been these past years. Democratic socialism remains alive and well as a statement about values (which, in Britain, it has mainly been, much to the scorn of Marxists through the ages), coupled with an empirical analysis showing the real-world affront to those values. But the application of those values now raises more questions than at any time in socialism's history.

A space has been cleared. A kind of growing-up has taken place. That is why it is important that, here in Britain, Labour makes energetic and imaginative use of the available opportunities. This will require rather more intellectual and political confidence than it has yet been able to muster. If it has really become a European social democratic party (and what else could it be?), why not proclaim the fact rather than go all coy about it? It should celebrate the fact that it is escaping from the conservative grip of old labourism and old Marxism, not pretend that it is just making a few organisational repairs. These are only space-clearing preliminaries to the main task (which is to understand, in becoming a social democratic party, why something other than traditional social democracy is now required) but, for a party which has long been the most conservative force in British politics, such preliminaries are indispensable.



It should also go on the ideological offensive, with big ideas blazing. But which exactly? As it happens, the left's wilderness years have spawned quite a few, all trying in one way or another to restate core socialist values in terms of the times. Just as the coherence of the new right has been exaggerated in the past decade, so the vitality of the left has been underestimated (not least by itself). Here too, the politics of the period provides much of the explanation, with its associated leakage of intellectual confidence. That is why David Marquand's *The Unprincipled Society* stands out as the decisive text of the period, with its bold and bracing communitarianism. There is a certain irony in the fact that while much of the left spent the Thatcher years trying to give a defensive socialist twist to the new individualism, it was a right-wing SDP renegade (to borrow the language of Labour's kamikaze period) who refused the existing terms of debate and retrieved a convincing politics—and economics—of community.

Here is Labour's big idea. All political concepts are slippery and elusive and all can fall into the wrong hands. Much of political argument is a matter of pressing one meaning, or cluster of meanings, against others. Not only is this true of



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the idea of community, it is notoriously so. But no matter: it is the idea for the hour.

You don't have to be a political publicist of Mandelsonian magnitude to see what Kinnock—of all people—could do with it, once he stops pretending to be a provincial bank manager. Are we a community or are we not? If so, what kind of community are we? He should stomp the country with these twin questions—and provide Labour's answers. After all, here we have a government committed to market individualism, presided over by a leader who believes there is no such thing as society, and with the consequences of these beliefs all around us. It is not difficult to see how, in one policy area after another, from education to transport, industry to the environment, the argument could be engaged and a politics of community pressed.

This, of course, is to put it in the rhetoric of the hustings. But that requires no apology. In politics big ideas have to be able to be put to work. This big idea also gets to the heart of the matter, in illuminating rival understandings of human

Bryan Gould bravely tried to fly some kites. Labour's culture is such that he had to duck and run

beings and human societies. A liberal belief in atomic, possessive individualism creates one kind of society (interest-pursuing, rule-bound competition). A socialist belief that we are all members one of another has different consequences (solidarity, cooperation and collective provision). The benefits of the rival approaches are likewise contested. In practice, of course, we muddle along with a mix'n'match of both beliefs and institutions, while those with power obligingly order matters for us, but there are moments (like the present) when it is necessary to retrieve some fundamentals.

This is especially necessary in a country and a culture where collective endeavour has always fallen foul of a pervasive individualism, where the idea of the state is undeveloped, and where the limitations of market liberalism become daily more apparent. Either we are a community, all in it together, with public interests and collective purposes, reflected in activities and institutions, or we are not. This was the relentless point of R H Tawney, the socialist philosopher who has historically had most influence on Labour's thinking. It is also Marquand's in his advocacy of a "developmental" state. It should now be Kinnock's. The invitation to make it has come from Thatcher.

Let's stay with Tawney for a moment, for the more difficult bit. One of his enduring insights was that equality of treatment was not the same as identity of treatment. This is relevant to the second question concerning what kind of community we should be talking about. It also connects with other recent attempts to find a contemporary idiom for the left. What would a socialism of community involve, a state without statism, providing the left with something vital for the future rather than just a warm, nostalgic glow?

For a start, it is obvious that it cannot be anchored merely in the national state, despite blusterings about sovereignty from both left and right. We need a notion of community that extends both upwards and downwards, able on one side to give some reality to the global community without which we shall perish (as millions of our fellow terrestrials already do), and on the other side able to find local and accessible arenas for collective life without which we shall eventually cease to be a society at all. But we also need a notion of community that goes wider and deeper, recognising and embracing diversity and plurality, a community of communities of many kinds, actively defended, sponsored and nurtured by an enabling state, but within a framework of guaranteed and extending basic rights of citizenship.

Can Labour really become a new kind of party offering a new kind of politics? Partly this depends on being intellectually and institutionally inventive, certainly more so than in the past. It is remarkable, and depressing, that Labour's policy review process has managed to avoid any larger theoretical stocktaking and that the party has not been an active participant in recent debates on the left. When Bryan Gould has bravely tried to fly some kites, as with his ideas on employee share ownership, Labour's culture has been such that he has had to duck and run. Despite a quite new openness on the left, an old Labour distrust of ideas and intellectuals lives on.

Similarly, for a party committed to extending the role of the state, it is remarkable how little thought it has ever given to the institutional character of an enlarged state (hence its vulnerability to the New Right). Yet it should be obsessed with the efficiency and effectiveness of its central instrument, which is not the same as siding with the producer groups who run public services, and devising new forms of accountability and representation.

In the same way, if Labour is serious about achieving economic objectives by building, European-style, new kinds of industrial and social partnerships, then it will have to be equally serious about finding the structures to match, which some ideological knee-jerkers will almost certainly dismiss as corporatist. The point, surely, is to develop a democratic corporatism which is open and accountable—and successful.

Community is also about power and self-government. In part this is a reminder that the private governments which run much of the economy are still the unfinished business of pluralist democracy. Democracy is about more than the state. But it is, crucially, about the state, something which some socialists (at least until 1989) have had difficulties in grasping. Here the immediate point is clear: until Labour is conspicuously democratic in its own structures and equally conspicuous in its commitment to a democratisation of the British state it will simply not carry conviction.

The shocking truth is that the British political culture has never taken democracy seriously (except as a periodic threat) and that Labour, left to right, Laski to Morrison, Benn to Hattersley, has also been united in its resistance to constitutional troublemakers who wanted to tamper with a system of "strong" government in the name of better representation or more accountability. It is not enough simply to say that Labour has been constitutionally orthodox. Just listen to Morrison ("when the people cheer the Queen and sing her praises, they are also cheering our free democracy"), or Laski on proportional representation ("a continuous threat to the stability of executive power").

But it still leaves the matter of a new kind of politics. This may well be most difficult of all. It means a politics not of answers but of dialogue. It means learning, sharing and trying things out. It means talking across and outside party lines. This is not as soggy as it sounds. Parties count for less (the old mass party is almost certainly a thing of the past) and groups count for more. Individuals and issues won't fit into the traditional political boxes. Politicians who behave in the old ways look increasingly ridiculous and nobody listens. The Thatcher response, evident again in the latest think-tanking on local government, is to abolish politics (what an election slogan!) as an activity of collective decision, except for the legitimating event stage-managed every four or five years, leaving individuals to negotiate their way through a series of markets in which accountability is at best blurred and typically invisible.

The left's response should be to democratise the activity of politics itself as well as the structures through which it takes place. Then we may have a genuine politics of community. That means a cultural revolution which, in Britain (or should that be England?) and in the Labour Party, will certainly be the hardest task of all. ●

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WHO BUYS IT?!

'Instant home ownership for no more than your rent'

MILLIONS of council tenants will be given the key to the door in a new vote-winning scheme to make them home owners. For the cost of their rent – or even less – they will soon be able to buy their homes in an amazing extension to the Government's home ownership campaign.

by MAGGIE PHIBBS

Tory leaders have agreed to put the revolutionary 'rents to mortgage' scheme at the heart of Maggie's most radical general election manifesto yet.

Ministers think the scheme, which could turn five million council tenants into home owners, will SHAME Neil Kinnock's Labour party, which has had to admit it was wrong to oppose the popular right to buy. Labour is unlikely to support the scheme.

GIVEAWAY

A minister said last night: "Handing over ownership of the remaining council homes to their tenants is certain to be in our manifesto.

"Flexi-ownership will appeal to traditional Labour voters while spreading the prosperity of the country under the Government."

The Government might also introduce English pilot schemes before the election, in battleground areas like the Midlands.

A tenant of five years gets a 20% discount, with up to 55% after 15 years. Michelle Forsyth, who has bought her Scottish Homes house under the scheme, told ROOF: It's a FANTASTIC idea. I never thought I'd be able to own my own home, because I couldn't afford right to buy.

NEST EGG

"But now I know I'll be well off in my old age with the nest egg I've always dreamed about. Home ownership is wonderful. It's changed my life. The Government should introduce this scheme for all council tenants as soon as possible.

"No-one will want to stay with the council – the repairs never get done."

Trial schemes in Scottish and Welsh housing organisations have been a RED HOT success, with hundreds of enquiries since they were set up last year.

Maggie is expected to announce a similar give-away scheme for all council tenants at the Tory conference next month in her bid to win a historic fourth term.

When a flexi-ownership tenant decides to sell, the generous interest-free loan on the amount not repaid in rent is returned. The difference between the original price plus the discount – probably tens of THOUSANDS of pounds – then belongs to the tenant, who can join the home ownership ladder.

Rifkind: Homes for all

Field: It was my idea

Continued on page 22.

PLUS: Soaraway mortgage arrears page 8

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The great council house giveaway - fact or fiction?

A scheme to convert rents into mortgage payments on council houses is being sold as the radical centrepiece of a new Tory housing revolution, but it should carry a government health warning, says the latest issue of ROOF, Shelter's housing magazine. Stoked up by the tabloid press, the hype is a deliberate attempt to sell instant home-ownership to council tenants, but the hidden costs, and the long term financial consequences, mean the deal is hardly the sale of the century.

Don't buy the fiction, buy the facts.

ROOF, Britain's brightest housing magazine, is available on subscription six times a year for £15 to individual subscribers, or at £3 for single copies. Other rates available - contact ROOF subscriptions for details. Subscribe now and get the September issue free - just send back the form below.

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LETTERS

A children's issue

It was depressing—and disquieting—to read Elizabeth Wilson's feature on child sexual abuse ("Immoral panics", 31 August) which dealt in part with my book on child pornography.

Wilson is entitled to her own views on the validity of my book—though I deny emphatically that I have in any way sensationalised a difficult and emotive subject: I simply attempted *to portray the reality of child* pornography without the self-imposed censorship that has dogged most previous reporting.

Most worrying, however, is her attempt at applying a feminist analysis to child sexual abuse and child pornography. The abuse of children is neither a feminist nor a masculinist issue: it is a children's issue.

Of course current statistics suggest that almost half of the known cases of child sexual abuse are carried out by the victim's natural father: but were we to carry out proper, empirical law enforcement and research, we would almost certainly discover that a substantial proportion of those same offenders have abused *outside* the family as well. This is what the paedophiles undergoing treatment tell us: in the absence of any other empirical evidence, we must recognise the importance of this anecdotal information.

I have argued for more than a year that we should hold a full royal commission or parliamentary inquiry into all aspects of paedophilia. That would provide some of the statistics that Wilson criticises me for not supplying. I have repeatedly made the same criticism of all the statutory agencies involved in child sexual abuse for not attempting to create some form of unified research programme, and specifically recommend at the end of my book a national data collection and analysis centre. This would also provide reliable statistics as to the proportion of women abusers. Currently we believe this to be around 2 per cent: but once again little attempt has been made either to define a female offender (much harder than with men) or to seek out evidence other than the most clear-cut prosecution cases.

The most dangerous aspect of Wilson's argument is its apparent attempt to dilute the paedophile's responsibility for his abusing. Had she spent even half the three years I have researching paedophilic behaviour patterns, she would understand that this is precisely what the abuser seeks to do both in his own mind and when confronted with the reality of his abuse.

While I argue for comprehensive treatment programmes for paedophiliac offenders, I am entirely convinced that, in order for these to be in any way successful, the offender must not be allowed to duck responsibility for his actions by blaming—as is common—either the child, the family or the dynamics of masculinity in our society. The paedophile has a choice: to abuse or not. Allowing the notion *at this stage* that the paedophile himself could be a victim will undoubtedly hinder an effective therapy programme.

For the record I wish also to correct some serious misrepresentations of my work—I have not presented the traditional and highly misleading stereotype of the paedophile as "the stranger in the raincoat who preys on children". I have laboured long and hard to dispel precisely this image.

I have not allied nudists with either homosexuals or paedophiles—simply presented the uncontrovertible fact that *Health and Efficiency* magazine (and its European editions) has repeatedly printed pictures of naked children and adverts that offer child pornography for sale. It is the paedophiles themselves who describe this publication as their most valued legal purchase.

I do not suggest that children are not sexual beings. But we must recognise that children who adopt overtly sexualised behaviour to adults may be doing so because they have been abused previously.

I do not blame the permissive sixties or pornography—adult or child—for child sexual abuse. I have tried to make it clear that child pornography is a misleading term since the material is no more than evidence recorded on film or videotape of child sexual abuse. As such it needs to be viewed outside the historic debate on the rights or wrongs of pornography.

Tim Tate
West Yorks

Moral panics

I heartily agree with Elizabeth Wilson that moral panics around "paedophilia" only serve to confuse the basic issue of child abuse.

I speak from bitter experience, because, a decade ago, when I was Director of the Albany Trust, a well-respected charity with a sound track record in careful sex education and counselling, I was unscrupulously vilified by "moral majority" groups for the "crime" of offering counselling support to paedophiles—who were mostly gentle people sorely afflicted by their sexual/emotional attraction to pre-pubescent children, and a world away in attitude and activity from callous or violent child abusers.

Ever since then, I have realised how almost impossible it is to inject any sense of balance or proportion, let alone common sense, into this emotionally charged debate. Elizabeth Wilson's article is a welcome effort to do so—but I hope that she will not in future contribute to the abuse of language by referring to paedophiles, however misguided they may be, as "child abusers". Most of them are, in fact, even more appalled than the rest of us at any form of cruelty or molestation (sexual or otherwise) towards children.

In conclusion, may I state that I myself have no sexual or emotional attraction whatsoever to children or adolescents of either sex. It is unfortunate but necessary to say this.

Antony Grey
London NW2

Partisan polemics

Since when has a well-respected journal, such as your own, allowed space to print partisan polemics on the current outbreak of violence in South Africa?

R W Johnson's article ("Anatomy of fear", 31 August) masquerades as a considered piece on the situation developing in the country, but is nothing short of an article in support of Chief Buthelezi and the Inkatha organisation.

Johnson describes as "slightly ludicrous" the claim of the African National Congress that there is police involvement on the side of Inkatha in the violence. Perhaps if he had informed readers that the very same Chief Buthelezi is Minister of Police in Kwazulu, then they would be able to consider whether he, or the ANC, was telling the truth on this issue.

Further, he repeats pro-apartheid propaganda by claiming that the division is a tribal one between Xhosas and Zulus. A number of political stay-at-homes called by pro-ANC forces have received strong support in Natal, which is overwhelmingly populated by Zulus and is the supposed power base of Buthelezi.

The call by the ANC for democratic elections for a Constituent Assembly to draw up a new constitution is aimed at accelerating democratic change and giving the people of South Africa a choice in who represents them at the negotiating table rather than allowing this to be made by commentators such as Johnson.

While accepting that your magazine must allow a plurality of views, I find it a disgrace that you give so much space to Johnson to propound his views on Southern Africa without allowing similar space for views more in tune with the oppressed black majority.

Is it your own racism or sheer laziness that prevents you from commissioning articles from a black commentator from the democratic movement in South Africa?

Colin Adkins
Mount Pleasant Road
London NW10

Who's the greenest?

I refer to your article "Who's the greenest?" (17 August) in which Jolyon Jenkins criticises Scott Limited's attempts to state its environmental position and clear away some of the confusion surrounding the making of disposable tissue products.

To respond to his principal points:
1. It is far from widely understood that Scott owns forests (nearly three million acres in North America) and farms trees to ensure continuity of supply. We grow more trees than we fell. We're proud of that.

2. Scott does *not* "destroy ancient peat bogs". Some areas were woodlands before we acquired them; others were agricultural land no longer required for that purpose. We grow a wide variety of trees. Scott's forests are open to the public and great care is taken to protect wildlife.

3. Now the energy issue: the question which Mr Jenkins overlooks is not whether more energy is used when producing new fibre (versus the recycling of waste paper) but how that energy is generated. Recycling processes are dependent on the use

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of fossil fuels (eg, coal, oil) whereas Scott's pulp mills burn "biomass" (branches, twigs, bark, etc), thereby generating 70 per cent of its energy needs. At some sites, surplus energy is sold to local electricity companies.

4. Minimal quantities of low toxicity herbicides are applied once or twice (never more than three times) during the life of a tree. These are sometimes sprayed from the air but in very tightly controlled situations and never near rivers or streams. Insecticides and fungicides are rarely, if ever, used—and then only in situations where it is safe to do so.

5. Rainforest: Scott had no plans whatsoever to destroy rainforest in Indonesia. It was conducting a feasibility study to see whether a tree farm could be established in an area of tropical savannah and withdrew from the project, having decided to meet its future needs for woodpulp in other ways.

It is fashionable to criticise manufacturing companies on environmental grounds. We're happy to be judged on our achievements in these areas—but preferably by critics who understand the facts.

C D Morgan
Scott Limited
East Grinstead
West Sussex

THIS ENGLAND

£5 book tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please)

● The Golden Man was then shifted to a side wing of the cathedral, but a week later Mr McComb received another call from the Dean of Lincoln which revealed the true nature of the problem. He complained that the statue was too "confrontational".

A cloth was draped around the statue's waist, then it was moved to the Russell Chantry, a side chapel with a "risque" mural by Bloomsbury artist Duncan Grant, which is normally kept locked.—*Observer* (George Moor)

● She probably complained she was a lonely child, in England while her parents were abroad, but I don't think she's justified. We saw her a lot. She used to come out for holidays and we'd come and take her out from Oxford at least once a term.—Nicholas Henderson in the *Sunday Times* (Sigbrid Rabiger)

● Parents of 33 Moslem pupils have withdrawn their children from a Church of England school in Manchester in protest at an alleged "lack of Islamic teachings and values".—*Financial Times* (L C Britt)

FRINGE BENEFITS

Fine art of the shipwright's trade

The proper domain of economics, wrote Kropotkin a century ago, is the satisfaction of human needs with the least possible waste of energy. In his day it could be exemplified in the beautifully balanced transport economy of the flat-bottomed spritsail barges, peculiar to the Thames estuary and the Kent and Essex coasts.

James Dodds

The barges, which carried straw and fodder to the city's horses, would return with dung and stable litter for the farms and market gardens. The barges carrying the yellow stock bricks that built Victorian London returned loaded with refuse and ashes from the city rubbish dumps, to use, along with local clay, chalk and river mud, for burning the bricks.

This "rough stuff" lay on the marshes behind the creeks and estuaries for 12 years before being incorporated in the brick slurry. The purple or green bubbles you can see on old yellow bricks are from glass in the ashes. The bricks were fired in clamps in the open air, carefully designed to use the wind. A little pile of ashes was ignited at the bottom and the stack burned from one to two million bricks for a couple of months, using no extra fuel at all.

The barges were also incredibly energy-efficient. I once went on the *Westmoreland*, tied up at Halstow. It could carry 40,000 bricks with 5,000 square feet of sail, handled by one man and a boy. There was a winch to pull the sail up and the sprit itself was used as a derrick for unloading. By the 1950s it was only used in the Thames Barge Race, started 125 years ago by William Dodd, known as the Golden Dustman as he made a fortune collecting and selling rubbish.

He has a near namesake, James Dodds, whose life has been similarly entangled with Thames barges and boat-building. At school an "under-achiever", happiest working on a Baltic trader at weekends, he left at 15 to become a four-year apprentice in the Maldon shipyard of Walter Cook and Son, a firm specialising in rebuilding and repairing Thames sailing barges and Colchester smacks.

The sheer excitement of the ancient art of boat-building has pushed him ever since. Dodds went to art school and ended up a graduate of the RCA. He now lives in a village near ours, with a formidable expertise about the way wooden ships have been put together ever since Noah built the ark. He has done some of those exquisite axonometric drawings to show how a boat is put together, which we dismiss as technical illustration, as though it were easy. He turns out a stream of paintings, woodcuts, linocuts, vinyl engravings, and mixtures of several of these, just to celebrate the ancient arts.

When he added a printing press to his workshop at Stoke-by-Nayland his mind turned to books. There has been a stream of ready-made themes. He did, for example, a little book of George Crabbe's poem *Peter Grimes*, which rightly went down big at Aldeburgh. It pushed home the grim truths of the fisherman's life that underlie Benjamin Britten's opera.

He is attracted by the similar arts of the builders of windmills and watermills. They succeeded in combining the skills of carpenter, blacksmith and foundryman to produce machinery that lasted for centuries, harnessing the power of wind and water.

His latest is a lovely book of the text of Kipling's poem *The Shipwright's Trade* (Jardine Press, Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk CO6 4SD, £9.95). It was well chosen, for Kipling stresses the experience of Dodds himself, "How very little since things was made/Things have altered in the shipwright's trade." Unlike almost every other English poet, Kipling had a reverence for craft skills, and knew that if you were going to build a boat, or a house, or a chair, out of wood, there were, at the most, three ways of going about it.

For James Dodds, "the poem brings back feelings of my own youth spent in and around a labyrinth of lean-to boat-sheds, barges, blocks and spars, learning a trade." We face a future with an endless supply of humans and a diminishing supply of resources. The work of people like Dodds tells how our ancestors perfected the art of using renewable resources, an immense amount of human labour and an even greater budget of skill, just to be able to move anyone or anything, even the heaviest of loads, anywhere.

Colin Ward

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Does Mrs Thatcher look

When the Iron Curtain was up they called her the Iron Lady. As intransigent as a rock and as hard as nails.

Литературная газета

Now the winds of Peristroika have blown across Eastern Europe, do the Russians view our Prime Minister with a little more affection? Or even more distrust?

Libération

Luckily, the new freedom of their press means that Soviet journalists can finally open up to us. And vice versa.

LIDOVÉ NOVINY

The same goes for reporters in Poland, Czechoslovakia and every other country in Europe (except, sadly, Albania).

gazeta

From September 7th, 13 of the Continent's leading papers are set to collaborate with the Guardian on an ambitious project.

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France on Finland. Germany on Greece. Spain on Switzerland. What do they think

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better from 1,500 miles away?

of each other? What do they think of us?

POLITIKEN

With our help British politicians could well learn a few home truths.

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DAGENS NYHETER.

And with our panel of experts at the heart of the translating and writing, the whole package will be put together with the passion and panache you'd expect.

de Volkskrant

With 1992 just around the corner and plans for monetary union well on the way, this should all come as a welcome change.

Süddeutsche Zeitung

At last there's a British newspaper that really can claim to be European.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Guardian Europe. Every Friday from September 7th. For Europe's point of view. Not ours.

The Guardian Europe

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Sarah McDonald

Murder in suburbia

Queen of crime or high priestess of nostalgia? Alison Light unravels the Agatha Christie phenomenon

The centenary celebrations of **Agatha Christie**'s birth seem unlikely to challenge the well-worn assumptions about our favourite literary aunt and her work: that her settings are backward-looking, her social attitudes simply snobbish and her imaginary milieux idealised pictures of the English upper middle class in the Home Counties.

Christie is usually patronised as an old-fashioned Tory whose only considerable talent was for producing puzzles rather than crime stories, palpably realistic when compared to the American hardboiled school or today's more psychologically feisty writers. As the theatre programme to *The Mousetrap* informs us, Agatha Christie has now been raised to the status of a national institution—"as English as Buckingham Palace, the House of Commons and the Tower of London." Consequently, it's harder than ever to look critically at a writer who has become, after Shakespeare and the Bible, the world's biggest publishing phenomenon.

Certainly, television viewers watching the recent re-runs of some of her *Miss Marple* stories could be forgiven for assuming that Christie was the high priestess of nostalgia rather than the Queen of Crime. *Nemesis*, for example, took place in the BBC's best 1950s never-never land: gleaming vintage cars, faded floral prints and glistening permanent waves, all the unobtrusive detail of a well-varnished period look. *Nemesis* seemed to revolve around the restoration of a misjudged heir to his stately home in the country, a rags-to-riches fantasy calculated to warm the cockles of any Tory heart. In the final scenes, a chamber orchestra broke into muted and reverent chords as the camera wafted us up a noble drive toward a miniature Blenheim. Miss Marple, deferentially twittering, was all but curtseying among the venerable columns.

Yet much of this razzamatazz was dreamed up by the producers. The original novel (published in the seventies, not the fifties) barely mentions the country house which they made so central. And the wronged hero in the novel turns out to be a "jailbird" who assaults women. Inspector Slack (the wideboy-cum-policeman who frequently crosses swords with the genteel sleuth on TV) is nonexistent. His character, marginal in the novels, has been largely worked up by the series as the main televisual evidence of Christie's snobbery. Neither is the reader treated to any descriptions of England's lost grandeur; the second murder, which the series used as an excuse for showing us round an 18th-century library, takes place in the original on a blowy clifftop. Whatever the nature of Christie's conservatism it is not of the English heritage variety.

In fact it is easy to forget that Christie was essentially a modern. She began writing after the Great War and made her reputation in the 1930s, not the fifties (Miss Marple is the creature of her own late middle age). Her appeal depended on Poirot, a displaced person spanning both the Edwardian past and a new commercial present of cheap flats, cocktails, the wireless and burgeoning tourism. Her cast lists include typists, dentists, salesmen (like the anti-hero of *The ABC Murders* which excels in Graham Greeneish seediness), receptionists, shopgirls, as well as the comfortably well off. Her stories are as likely to take us into the tudorbethan villas of the stockbroker belt, the

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bungalow and the boarding house as the library or billiards room.

It is the respectably ordinary that intrigues her most. Compared to many of her fellow-scribblers, Christie is seldom given to the kind of writerly self-aggrandisement which disfigures English letters in the period. Unlike Dorothy L Sayers (with whom she is frequently yoked), she is not in love with a Lord and is far less interested in aping the aristocracy than in identifying the mood of a new middlebrow readership. Her characters express a cheerful and relaxed philistinism, voicing their insular prejudices while she maintains a strict authorial neutrality. Not surprisingly, contemporary fans like Herbert Read and Sergei Eisenstein enjoyed her dispassionate formalism.

Far from being sealed in aspic, even her rural settings are disturbed by the figures of change: weekenders, newcomers and refugees from the city. The inhabitants of King's Abbot in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, her first major success in 1926, were up to date in being primarily tenants, like the retired colonel who "had never been in the Shanghai club in his life". (*The Mousetrap*, still pulling them in with its image of English traditionalism, is set among strangers in a guest house.) These are villages in which no one's lineage is reliable. Her much-maligned "pasteboard types"—the dyspeptic squire, the acidulated spinster, the mild-mannered family doctor—are indeed theatrical, since even the most innocent-seeming in such a demobilised world is potentially acting a part. More than any other writer, Agatha Christie found a form that successfully played upon the distrust circulating within an expanding middle class between the wars. She made entertainment out of the anxiety about each other's standing that is at the heart of English class feeling.

As for being the most English of writers, that too depends upon a paradox. Christie's affection for middle-class England was one which, like many of us, she was best able to feel at a distance. Though she was a passionate homemaker, she was also a dedicated traveller and wrote many of her best-known novels—*Murder on the Orient Express*, *Appointment with Death* and *The ABC Murders* among them—on the hoof. This most proper of English ladies recovered from a breakdown when her first husband left her, by travelling alone in the Middle East, shocked her friends by marrying again at 40 a man 15 years her junior, and regularly spent several months in the year roughing it on archaeological digs in Syria. Plotting murder in the vicarage as she sat writing inside a hot tent in the desert, her England was always imagined as a façade, an appearance, which, like that of social position, one tries to keep up no matter how many times it is exposed as a sham.

If this is a conservative message then it is an ambiguous one. It made her as eager to relish the present as to conjure up the pathos of the past. Even Miss Marple, in one of Christie's late efforts, *At Bertram's Hotel*, solves a crime by recognising that nostalgia is a species of cover-up: "One should not ever try to go back... the essence of life is going forward. Life is really a one-way street, isn't it?"

Film

Maternal melodramas

Motherhood and the movies don't mix, argues Suzanne Moore

Modern motherhood is simply wonderful. It's hip, fun and so very easy. Just look at all those poor, blank babies dragged down catwalks or staring out from magazine covers cradled by their model mums. *She*, one of the few magazines with rising circulation figures at the moment, has cleverly relaunched itself as the magazine for "women who juggle their lives". Though I've never met a child who could be successfully juggled, in the new myth of motherhood *anything* is possible. You too can be like Neneh Cherry, eight months pregnant and dancing in a Lycra dress on *Top of the Pops*. You too can be like Fergie, able to jet off for the best skiing without a moment's worry about a babysitter. Or you can even be like pampered Paula Yates, call your children ridiculous names, pay for nannies so you can promote your exclusive underwear collection and then write a book that says women with children really shouldn't work.

This may all be a long way from the image of the down-trodden, self-sacrificing mother, but whether the new myth is any easier to live with than the old myth is debatable. Culturally, the representation of motherhood *per se* still seems impossibly difficult, resting as it does on the lethal combination of denial and idealisation.

This is one reason why many feminist film scholars have turned to the classic melodramas of the thirties and forties, a genre exemplary in its ambiguous representation not only of motherhood but of femininity in general. Before this recent rehabilitation, melodrama was routinely dismissed as a lower form given to embarrassing stylistic excess. That this was the very quality cherished by its largely female fans is no coincidence. Popular female pleasures have always been castigated by the (mostly) male guardians of official culture.

One of the best-known movies of the sub-genre dubbed "the maternal melodrama" remains *Stella Dallas*, the 1937 film starring Barbara Stanwyck as the girl from the wrong side of the tracks who marries above her station but never manages to hide her origins. Eventually she gives up her daughter for the higher goal of upward mobility. Thousands of noses must have been blown during the final scene, in which Stanwyck stands outside in the rain watching but excluded from her daughter's society wedding.

This is the scene deeply etched on the memory of Val, a character in Marilyn French's novel *The Women's Room*. "How they got us to consent to our own eradication! I didn't just feel pity for her; I felt that shock of recognition...," she says. Yet *Stella Dallas* has been read very much as a film of its time expressing an underlying anxiety about the disruption of traditional sex-roles during the Depression. Why this anxiety should always focus on the figure of the mother is another story.

A long way from the down-trodden mother: Bette Midler as Stella Claire

And why 1990 should see a remake of this film is still another. That Hollywood is still floundering about trying to make "women's films" or at least cope with the changing demographics of cinema-goers is one possibility. Enter Bette Midler, hardly known as the self-sacrificing type, in the Stanwyck part.

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Though maybe this is the reason that the divine Miss M has recently been given to crowing about the joys of motherhood. You'll be pleased to hear that it has made her go "mushy".

Indeed mushy might be the best word to describe the whole of this film. Unlike her last film, *Beaches*, which was an effortlessly weepy female buddy movie, **Stella** is so contrived that it is more likely to provoke laughter than tears. Apart from Midler's dire wardrobe and almost vaudeville performance, the basic components of the story don't survive the update from the thirties to the sixties.

Stella mark two is a sassy barmaid who has a fling with a dapper doctor, gets pregnant and has to go it alone. Though the fluorescent ribbed jumpers may tell us it's the sixties, nothing else does. There is no contraception or abortion and no single mothers around. There is only Ed Munn—played by the ubiquitous John Goodman of *Roseanne* fame, who appears to be the US's all-round best friend—for support.

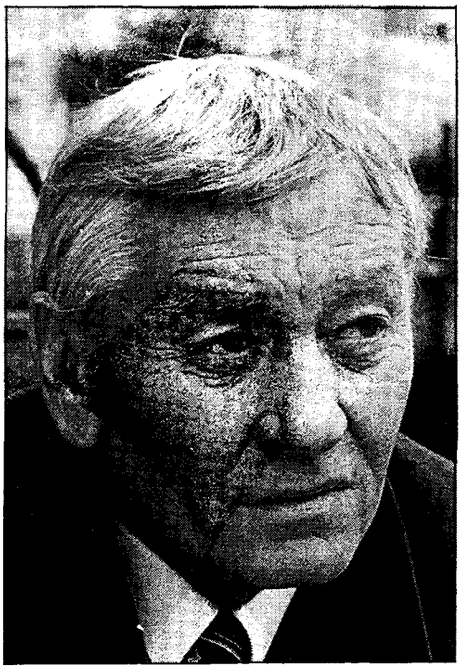
Stella, nevertheless, survives until Jenny becomes a teenager and she realises that she cannot provide the kind of background that any upwardly mobile adolescent requires: "books, museums, art-stuff". So Jenny swaps her hunky leather-jacketed boyfriend for a wimpy WASP in a blazer and gets packed off to live with her Dad. Dad by now has acquired a properly sophisticated girlfriend who, instead of telling children to shut up, says elegantly "Less is more."

She is in sharp contrast to Stella, for whom "More is more", which is why Stella ends up outside the window in bag-lady garb, and the new girlfriend inside at Jenny's wedding. Much of this is ludicrous, the operations of class so crudely drawn as to be totally unbelievable.

Are we to believe, for instance, that all working-class American youth are druggie delinquents while their upper-class counterparts are drug-free paragons of virtue who want nothing more than to work on literacy programmes for the underprivileged? Are we to believe that inter-class marriage is still the only way for women to change their lives? And are we to believe, as we did in the thirties, that a mother's desires must always be sacrificed for her daughter's needs?

The punishment in the classic maternal melodrama for a woman who steps out of place is this separation from her child—duty and desire being mutually exclusive. Midler, like Stanwyck, is also punished for being too obvious, for trying too hard. Her very appearance is a "masquerade of femininity" rather than an acceptance that femininity must always appear totally natural.

What Linda Williams describes as "the device of devaluing and debasing the actual figure of the mother while sanctifying the institution of motherhood itself" is as reactionary now as it was 50 years ago. We are still left with the "ultimate unrepresentability" of motherhood. Do the contemporary heirs to the classic melodrama—the soap stars—offer any more hope? If you want self-sacrifice nineties style, just tune in to the long-suffering Sheila Grant of *Brookside* or Pauline Fowler of *Eastenders*, for these are the ever-present flipside to the designer-baby brigade.



Television

Key to the crime

Two visions of the city blend in Taggart, *says Cairns Craig*

Imagine a police series—ho hum, it'll fill another 50 minutes between commercials. Imagine: a *Scottish* police series—och aye, it'll go in the records as a contribution to keeping lots of local actors employed. Imagine *Taggart*: structure formulaic—the old, hard-bitten cop who looks and sounds like a criminal; the young side-kick, learning the trade but aware of a world whose values have changed; plots just sufficiently elliptical to keep dozing viewers alert. Imagine a Glasgow detective with a face that looks so battered and weary and angry and resigned he doesn't need to *act*, he simply needs to let the camera *extract* the emotion his voice could never express.

The rationale for such a series? Location. It isn't plot or character that is interesting to us in the cop series: it is atmosphere. The detective may search for the key to the crime, but the crime is the key that unlocks for us the strangeness of a city—Holmes's London, Maigret's Paris, *Cagney and Lacey*'s New York.

Taggart's success is founded on exploiting Glasgow—or rather, on exploiting two Glasgows. On the one hand, the old Glasgow of crime and violence and poverty, the city of ruthless gangs and working-class squalor whose literary archetypes were set by the novel *No Mean City*; on the other, the new Glasgow, a *nouveau riche* city with the Scottish hills and lochs as playground, a city of easy money.

Taggart's Glasgow is a city become strange to itself, uneasy, restless, aggressive, uncertain whether its old identity that was built (like Mark McManus's face) on the virtue of survival can survive the elimination of the harshness it resisted. The contradictions of Glasgow have turned it suddenly into a cinematically interesting place. Bill Forsyth's *Comfort and Joy*, John Byrne's *Tutti Frutti*, John Brown's *The Justice Game*: all focus on the rich mixture of violence and creativity, deprivation and vitality that mingle in the gap between the old and the new Glasgows.

But what those film-makers also discovered through the eye of the camera is how much Glasgow's streets look like the old parts of New York. It can hardly be an accident that all of them allude to New York one way or another, just as it was not simply ignorance that made poor immigrants from eastern Europe believe that they had arrived in the New York they had paid passage to when they were set down in Glasgow—believed it long enough for the ships to escape port with their money. Glasgow has become an environment that can be exploited for its menacing similarity to—or its comic disjunction from—the metropolis we all know in the movies.

What the film-makers have been pointing to, however, represents a real truth about Glasgow: for a long time it was barely part of Scotland—or indeed, of Britain. It belonged to that country without government or passports whose territory was ocean, the country of the Atlantic seaboards, whose great cities—Glasgow, Belfast, Boston, New York and Baltimore—were more like each other than they were like their hinterlands.

Glasgow likes to imagine itself as being a city of working-class solidarity (thus the importance of the People's Palace museum and of the "Words and Stones" exhibition in this year's cultural events). But that working-class experience was only part of the story: the other part was the wealth that could accumulate the Burrell collection, wealth built on the twin pillars of immigration, which kept wages down, and religious bigotry, which kept everyone in their place. The old Glasgow was a cultural melting pot which used sentimental traditions of Scottishness to unify its disparate communities. It is only as the actual community has become more homogeneous that it has been able to acknowledge its real diversity.

Taggart is hardly great TV art, but it gets its atmosphere from something very real—the confrontation between these different versions of the city. Maggie Bell's song over the credits celebrates this "no mean city"; and Taggart's disabled wife echoes the crippled working-class wife of J M Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls*, which set the model for the sentimental presentation of Scottish life from the 1890s onwards. Coyly self-conscious about the archetypes it uses, what keeps *Taggart* going is that the detective is always in search of a crime that is not on the record books, a crime for which there is plenty of evidence but no body—the destruction of the old values of the city that no longer have a community to sustain them; and the slow destruction—or implacable survival—of himself as their last representative.

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Theatre

Trapped by tradition

Andrew Pulver on the build-up to the Japan Festival

On the evidence of the Edinburgh Festival, Japanese theatre is in a healthy state. Three productions from established Japanese companies formed the centrepiece of the international season: all proved to be proficient, exuberant, good-humoured and regularly spell-binding. At the same time, these performances seem to be developing a distinctively cosmopolitan flavour that makes them perfect fodder for the festival circuit. In a sense, these companies—Ninagawa, Chijinkai, Yume No Yuminsha—are leaving behind their cultural distinctiveness and developing their theatre as international product, capable of being consumed from LA to Lisbon.

Ninagawa, as a director, is really in a class by himself. His production of *Sotoba Komachi*, Mishima's modernised version of a traditional *noh* play, was the one masterpiece of the festival. Staged with lush, suffocating sensuousness, Mishima's impassioned tale of a poet's death took on an underwater feel, as tangible swathes of light cut across the stage, and roses dripped perpetually from the roof. Ninagawa has formulated a sophisticated, cross-cultural theatrical language which is the heart of his success; in which he can exploit Mishima's sense of decadence without sacrificing the dignity of his theatre and his responsiveness to tradition.

Ninagawa represents the respectable, classical face of modern Japan. Dissension from this model comes, however, from Hideki Noda, writer, director and performer of Yume No Yuminsha's *Half Gods*. Ninagawa's purpose, he considers, is "to create something exotic for the foreigners". Unashamedly a product of Japan's postwar, TV-watching, comic-reading, west-obsessed youth, Noda has little time for the theatrical traditions of Japan: "Yume No Yuminsha are presenting what the Japanese are now. We have all grown up with western culture, and that has ended our distinctiveness."

Like the Chijinkai's *Great Doctor Yubuhara*, Noda offers a particular kind of satirical parable, conducted at breakneck speed and with tremendous discipline; fusing together ideas and genres (mostly culled from American kitsch) with enormous good humour. Their performance mode has as much in common with the European grotesques of *commedia dell'arte* or Théâtre de Complicité, as with the traditional structures of *noh* or *kabuki*. Says Noda: "*Kabuki* is not very interesting to people in Japan: it is very slow—but it does have a long history. When I meet *kabuki* actors I am overwhelmed by their strength, but the problem is this: Shakespeare existed at the same time as *kabuki*, and has been evolving ever since: *kabuki* stopped growing 100 years ago when the new, western drama came to Japan."

American kitsch meets "noh" and "kabuki" in Chijinkai's "Great Doctor Yubuhara"

This seems to be the central issue: the general cultural crisis that has beset Japan for most of the 20th century. Mishima's own response involved an attempt to revitalise Japanese traditional forms. While this was confined to theatre, it made little impact; his political activity, however, resulted in hara-kiri—an ultimate act of defiance to the 20th century. Noda's rejectionism forms the other side of the coin: "In a way we see ourselves as filling a gap between east and west—Japanese ideas are very fuzzy, all-embracing. In the west, everything is stipulated, has boundaries—it is our job to work towards this idea." His lack of respect for the past is at once disturbing, and revealing.

Symptomatic of this ambiguity is the ever-increasing presence of Japanese corporate money in international arts sponsorship. This year, for example, the Dai-Ichi Bank sponsored the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition; the Brothers International laid out £3 million on the Hallé Orchestra; and Nissan stepped in at the last minute to save the children's matinées at the Royal Opera House.

The attraction of these established but ailing British institutions is clear, according to Caroline Kay, Head of External Affairs of the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts. "Japanese companies are beginning to realise their value as PR exercises." She cites the special performance of *Candide* at the Barbican, with Bernstein conducting. "It was an extraordinary event, corporate hospitality on a massive scale. Planeloads of people were flown in from Tokyo just for it." Japanese respect for, interest in, even love-affair with, the grand old institutions of the west is reaching a critical phase as their paymasters are claiming their share of what in Britain and the US has reached epidemic proportions: the expropriation of high culture for commercial entertainments.

Ostensibly to mark the centenary of the Japan Society, 1991 sees the Japan Festival—a multi-city, multi-venue, multi-media extravaganza. Boasting the joint patronage of Prince Charles and Crown Prince Naruhito, as well as a "Committee of Honour" made up of nine senior Tory MPs (including the Prime Minister, Douglas Hurd, and Chris Patten), the Japan Festival is seeking to present its dismembered cultural perspectives as a unified and wholesome phenomenon.

As ever, political and economic considerations (naked greed, in fact) are not far from the surface—at least on the British side. Festival chairman Sir Peter Parker said recently, "Japan is now the world's most powerful economic force, and it is in our interests to know it better." Aiming at raising up to £20 million in private sponsorship, the festival has enlisted the support of over 75 chief executives of Japanese corporations, as well as active sponsorship from a number of British household names (Midland, BA, BT, Natwest, P&O). The festival events themselves appear equally high-powered: Hokusai at the Royal Academy, Ninagawa at the National Theatre, Sumo at the Albert Hall, robots at the Science Museum. As an ideal of corporate sponsorship, the Japan Festival will function in an unbearably perfect mode; the theatre on display in Edinburgh is the first instalment in the export of the Japanese culture-product. It will be something to see: no doubt about that. But it will occupy a stratosphere where culture and theatre are tools for other more pragmatic concerns. Hardly the most relaxing of environments.

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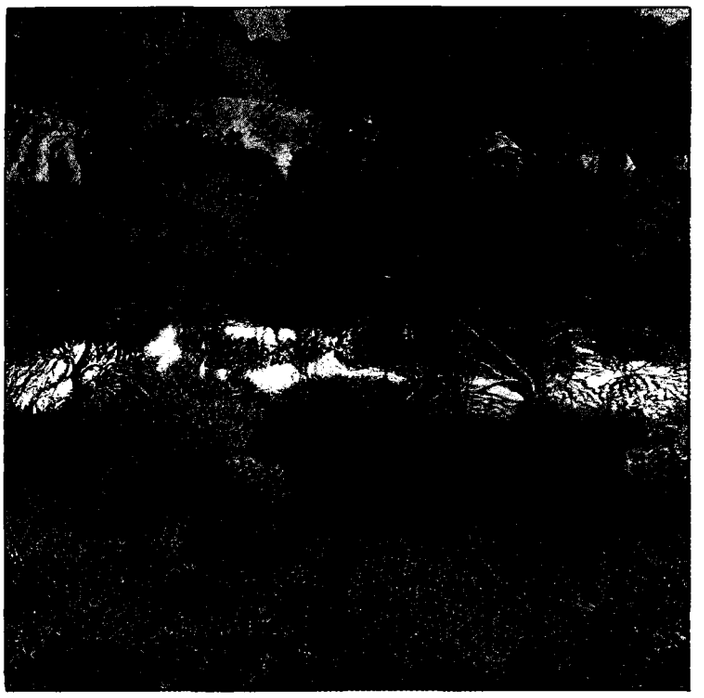
Art

Nothing but the truth

Adrian Berg is a landscape painter who works in series. His paintings are included in such public collections as the Tate's. Here he comes face-to-face with Monet



When Munich staged the Olympics in 1972, the *Haus der Kunst* borrowed a late Monet from the Metropolitan Museum in New York, a picture of a Japanese bridge, rather a grey painting, as I remember it. When I got back to London I spent the winter rehashing that picture, though ostensibly painting a view I could see, until I had digested it.

There is rather more than one painting to digest at the Royal Academy, which is marking the centenary of Monet's 1890s series paintings with the exhibition **Monet in the '90s**.

Although *fin de siècle* France approved of its native son outgrowing the mere impressionism he had embarked on 15 years before, and at the mature age of 49 settling down to make something more substantial, it didn't purchase any complete work as several people felt it should have done. Nothing was purchased until Clemenceau signed the Treaty of Versailles and then called on the artist for something to mark the occasion. The works from the series sold piecemeal, but the current exhibition brings some of them together again; which is just as they were first shown and, more importantly, as they were painted to be shown.

As the appearance of any scene alters with the light that bathes it, it is a logical step for anyone who paints one scene to go on to paint a series. Monet's problem was that he had only a few minutes to record the present appearance of a scene. If that was not long enough and memory not to be trusted, he had to wait till the same time the next day and hope that the weather would be the same. In addition, with landscape painting there's the problem of the seasons: they are always changing. Any one season lasts about a week, if the weather holds. It was not unusual for Monet to have to wait a year or two to be able to repeat the experience. This nation of gardeners should be able to understand that.

"A landscape hardly exists at all as a landscape, because its appearance is constantly changing; it lives by virtue of its surroundings—the air and light—which vary continually." (Monet)

The earliest two series in the exhibition are comparative failures. Painted from two rather forbidding viewpoints in the mountains of the Massif Central (not too far from home, his practice over the next decade), and unfrequented, they get bogged down in Welsh-type mountainside covering conventional foreground, middleground and distance. Though compositionally dull, the paint handling is certainly not. The paint everywhere is as fresh as if it had just been set down. Only being able to work on a canvas for a limited period of time meant that the paint dried before the next onslaught.

The next year, and with the cornstacks, he succeeds. For all the clinical way in which he has

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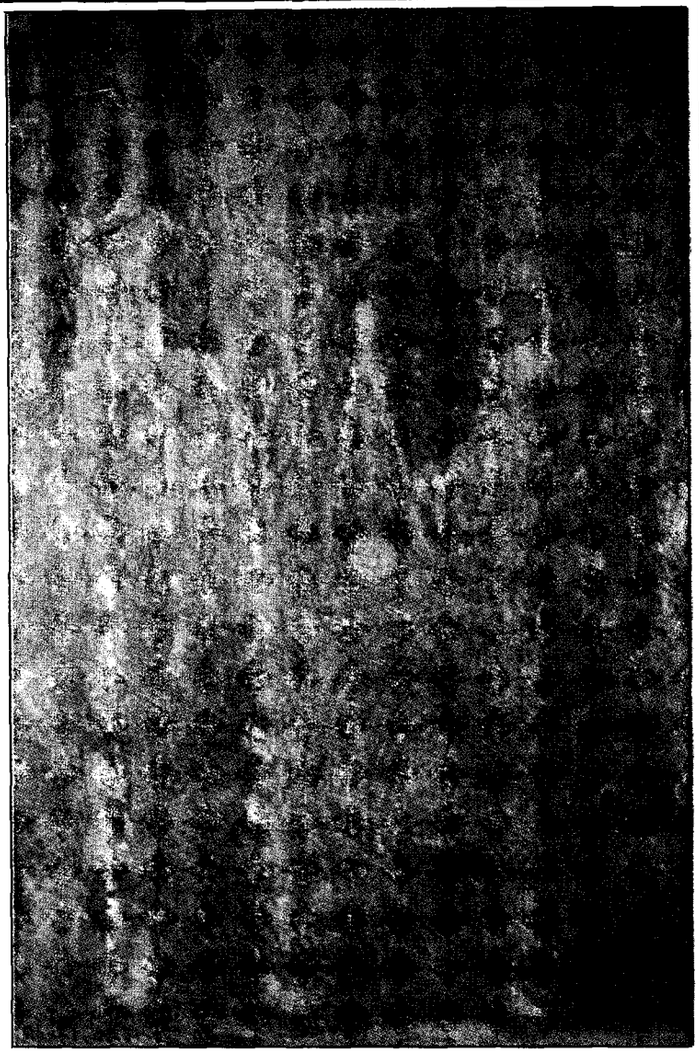

Far left: "Gloucester Gate, Regent's Park, Autumn, Winter, Spring", 1977-79, by Adrian Berg. Above: Monet's series of the Gothic west façade of Rouen Cathedral, 1892-94, on show together at the Royal Academy

set up the problem, Monet is not seeking a factual solution.

Back in the studio, he shifts the stacks and changes the colours. The pictures are shown together. They need to contrast, to set each other off and not compete with each other. They are among the best put together of his paintings. The torrent of colour and padding of pigment unite in geometric simplicity.

I was puzzled by the samples of his series when I first saw them at the Tate in the late fifties. I suppose I thought the pictures unnatural—that he was taking liberties. They are. He was.

Topping these is the series of the great Gothic west façade of Rouen Cathedral. Each one convinces while being as different from any of the others as can be. The subject or motif could scarcely be more different from those of the earlier series—he must have found the Palace of Westminster, by comparison, a pushover.

Monet's strategy throughout the decade remained unchanged. Mostly the motif was supplied by water, whether the sea off the Normandy Coast (a childhood memory) or the river, the Seine or the Thames. The two pairs of London paintings from his garret in the Savoy barely hint at the three magnificent series he started here. Venice should have followed. What we have instead are less successful. The influence of Japanese prints (used to wrap the fruit that came to Les Halles) is as yet unassimilated.

"I am becoming a very slow worker, which depresses me, but the further I go the more I understand that it is imperative to work a great deal to achieve... 'instantaneity' above all... the same light presence everywhere."
(Monet)

The paintings of the Seine in particular suffer today from the influence of Monet's plagiarists, of which there have been many. The first generation of them encamped around his garden at Giverny, for Monet was to live long enough to be famed. Such was his following that the waters have become very muddied indeed. Painting, like language, once it has entered the sewers, is in need of renewal.

The present show concludes in 1900 with a new beginning: the start of the series of the Japanese bridge he had built over the pond in his garden. It too is a comparative failure, but in a quarter of a century this same series will end with his best work.

Monet in the '90s: The Series Paintings *is showing at the Royal Academy, Piccadilly until 9 December.*

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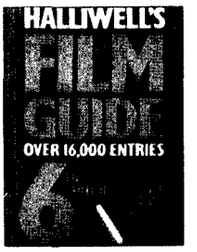
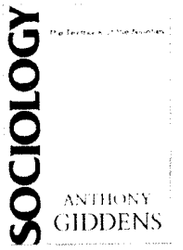
3 

4 

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The column and the crowd

TOTALITARIAN ART
Igor Golomstock
Collins Harvill £30

David Edgar

Richard Nixon once remarked that political propaganda relies on repetition: the moment when you get bored with saying something is the moment—probably—when it's beginning to get through. Thus the fact that Igor Golomstock's book feels a mite repetitive itself is partly a matter of form following content. What Golomstock has done is to assemble an impressive mass of verbal and visual evidence for the notion that totalitarianism is a distinct and discrete international style of the 20th-century visual arts, "a style which deserves both its own name and the most careful study."

In the pursuit of this thesis, Golomstock begins with Italian futurism, noting its conscious and unconscious links with the fledgeling Soviet variety and comparing the eclipse of both. A little later, he undertakes a short detour through Chinese art (at, as it were, the other end of the process), noting how the virtually unknown medium of oils and method of easel-painting were imported from Soviet socialist realism ("a striking example of the universality of the mechanisms of the totalitarian culture"; also an irony in itself, as both fascist and communist futurists had initially regarded the easel as the principal enemy of revolutionary art).

But the bulk of the book concerns itself with the comparison between Soviet socialist realism, as it developed in the late twenties and thirties, and the principles of Nazi art as they emerged more or less full grown in 1933. Golomstock notes the differences between the two histories and the two styles (Lenin and Stalin's lack of initial interest in aesthetic questions as such, Hitler's preoccupation with them; the Nazi obsession with the column, socialist realism's with the crowd). But he does so only to contrast those minor discrepancies with the great mass of similarities: the hostility to the avant-garde, the consequent cult of accessibility, the fascination with the 19th century, the obsession with the monumental, the concern for the preservation of the national tradition (more pronounced in Russia after the defeat of racial nationalism in Germany) and the similarity of forms (the predominance of leader-portraits, historical and battle scenes, idealised domestic and rural genre paintings; the virtual absence of landscapes, still-lifes, and—in the Soviet Union but not in Germany—nudes).

These similarities are demonstrated through extensive quotation and even more effective illustration, and amount to an irrefutable case for the correspondence between Nazi and Soviet art, at least in the thirties and forties. What it doesn't amount to is a proof of the correspondence of the ideologies behind the artefacts. And because it is clearly Golomstock's project to demonstrate the ideological identity of communism and fascism, it is worth exploring the arguments against this point of view.

E Schmidt's "Girl from the Hitler Youth" transforms a portrait of an actual person into a generalised image **(see also page 36)**

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The first is that while both ideologies were responses to modernism, that does not imply that they were the same thing. Initially, Italian fascism and Soviet communism embraced the optimistic, action-and-technology side of the modern movement; later both turned against what they regarded as modernism's increasing inaccessibility, pessimism and decadence. Secondly, Golomstock could give a lot more space to the argument that neo-classicism was an international style of the thirties anyway, and that, in terms of monumental building, New York, rather than Moscow or Berlin, led the way (indeed, many Stalinist buildings are, in effect, Empire States with shorter trunks and bigger bottoms).

While, thirdly, there is the argument that what was distinctively totalitarian about Nazi and Soviet art was not its aesthetic character as such, but the fact that both systems were able to impose it on their societies and ban more or less everything else. For have we not in our country been living through a period in which modernism in the arts is increasingly associated with wilful obscurity, avant-garde artists are berated for pessimism and negativity (not least towards the achievements of the government), alternative cultures are dismissed as decadent or primitive (or "sick"), calls are made for the reassertion of national cultural heritage, neo-classicism rages unchecked through the land and images of the Leader turn up on the crockery?

What is essentially different, of course, is that neither the Centre for Policy Studies nor Sir Kingsley (nor indeed Professors Scruton and Stone) possesses, nor, one hopes, would want to possess, the power to impose their cultural prejudices on the rest of us. One of Golomstock's most telling arguments is that "it was the artistic avant-garde of the 1910s and 1920s who first elaborated a totalitarian ideology of culture", and that by calling so vociferously for the sweeping away of all opposing forces, they could not complain when they themselves were swept away. But this does not mean that the sweepers had anything more in common than the possession of a peculiarly effective broom.

And, finally, Golomstock could pay more attention to the dissimilarities that he mentions. As George Steiner has argued most effectively, whatever their superficial similarities, communism is a mythology of the human future, "a terrible over-estimate of man's capacities for altruism", while fascism is in essence "the code of the hoodlum". One might add also that, if communism has its sights set on tomorrow (for all late Stalinism's harking back to the bucolic *Peredvizhniki*), then fascism has its ultimate eye fixed on the past.

Golomstock notes the fact that Nazi pastoral is all spinning wheels and the Soviet equivalent all tractors, and argues that this is because the German peasantry really did have up-to-date farm machinery and so tractors weren't as appealing as propaganda. You could equally argue that fascism held out the image of a pre-urban, organic society based on blood and soil, whereas communism—for all its Slavophile sentimentality—retained its vision of a technologically radiant future. Further, the Nazi marching column with its indistinguishable hatchet faces isn't quite the same as the utopianly cheerful Soviet factory or *kolkhoz* crowd: even in the Soviet military pictures the faces and postures are different, specific and—within limits—individual.

In the early sixties, Igor Golomstock slipped a Nazi genre painting into the middle of a pile of socialist realist reproductions he was showing to a group of Russian schoolchildren, and, perhaps predictably, found the painting ascribed to a well-regarded Soviet painter. This incident demonstrated to the art historian that in the mirror of their art, "the two systems betrayed their true likeness and reached a near-absolute identity of style." The fact that this case is not quite proven does not detract from the scholarship and the interest of the book he subsequently wrote.

In praise of order

AS IT WAS: PLEASURES, LANDSCAPES AND JUSTICE
Sybille Bedford
Sinclair-Stevenson £14.95

Carole Angier

People knock the Booker Prize, but it's entirely due to it—or to *Jigsaw* nearly winning it—that we owe this re-publication of Sybille Bedford's essays. Thank you, Booker Prize.

Sybille Bedford is such a good writer. She has an idiosyncratic style, allusive and personal, like (carefully stylised) chat ("...No. This person in armour and the pink gloves on the fountain is a *bear*"). She is a master of the adjective and the comma, of the long, supple, thrilling list that unfolds before one like one of the scenes she describes ("water on the move, on the roll, foaming, whirling, swishing water, rapid water toppling over cliffs in suicidal dash; still water, majestic water, horizons of water; tinkling water splashing in elegant quicksilver rays...").

Her descriptions are exact—the interior of a hotel like "a polished walnut", the "cultivated and articulate capacity" of the French "for taking life physically". She is funny—on foreigners' English, for instance, *de rigueur* but irresistible (the Italian restaurant where you can eat "foot & bean" and "humids", the Yugoslav bookshop where you can read Džek London, Mark Tven and Džen Ostin). She is sharp and unillusioned, on Italian noise ("either you are Italian or Italian-built and don't hear it, or you aren't and you do and it is unbearable"), on Yugoslav crowds ("Their overall aspect is one of sallowness, burdens and poor clothes"), on the Portuguese ("Painstaking, patient, kind, placid, slow. Above all, very, very, very slow").

But she is positive; she finds something to love or admire everywhere. Still, she clearly prefers western Europe to the edge of the east she encounters in the Balkans. This is partly the prejudice of a traveller whose major needs are, as she says, "order, comfort, calm". But I suspect these are her needs always. She is happiest in Switzerland and in Denmark, where "the water is safe and the wallet inside the pocket", where the old and sick are cared for, the young well educated, where there is care for freedom and work for all. (And already in 1962 Sybille Bedford wrote: "Alack poor Britain!")

The travel pieces contain her most beautiful writing, but (for me) they occasionally tempt her to indulge too much in her favourite subjects of food and wine. It is the drama, the accuracy and narrative drive of her pieces on the law which were the highest points of this book for me. There are five, one on "Judges at work" and one on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in England, two on the trial of Jack Ruby in America, and one on the Auschwitz trial of 1964-65 in Germany.

Once again the keynote, upliftingly, is admiration (at least, again, of Europe; Sybille Bedford is less impressed by the publicity-seeking Judge Brown of Dallas). She is clearly keen on judges (this reminds me of the judge in *Jigsaw*, whose cruelty to the woman who devotedly loved him she never condemned, or even seemed to notice). Judges have to be intelligent, fair and strong, and most of Sybille Bedford's are; some are even kind (Lord Justice Harman), handsome (Mr Justice Elwes), human (Judge Hofmeyer). This is very different from the feet-of-clay journalism we're accustomed to today, mostly refreshingly so; one only fears the side of it that is connected to Sybille Bedford's own warning at the end of her Auschwitz essay: "Beware of being sheep."

This essay deals as well as it is possible to do with the old, unanswerable questions: how could people do such things? Does it show in their faces? How many Germans knew? Why was there not more revulsion? Sybille Bedford's answers are measured, decent; her reporting clear and good (excellent summaries of the history of anti-Semitic legislation, of the involvement of German industry, of both the horrors and the heroisms). The trial taught me one thing I hadn't learned even from Primo Levi: that it was possible to be a good SS-man, even in Auschwitz. There was one, an officer called Flacke. I am glad to know it.

But this essay and the ones on Jack Ruby necessarily partake too much in the horror and boredom of their subjects (the Auschwitz trial lasted nearly *two years*, and at the end of it the judge briefly broke down). The gem of the collection is the *Lady Chatterley* trial. Here all Sybille Bedford's tastes and talents come together.

She is unrestrainedly on the side of the defence, and no counsel for the prosecution (Mr Mervyn Griffith-Jones) or judge (Mr Justice Byrne) was ever more thoroughly, more gleefully exposed as a bigot and a philistine. The academic great and good march proudly through these pages, being useful for a change, in one of their finest hours—Graham Hough and Helen Gardner, Vivian da Sola Pinto and Richard Hoggart ("'Reverence for what?' screamed Mr Griffith-Jones. '*The balls*?' 'Indeed, yes,' said Mr Hoggart gently"). Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive.

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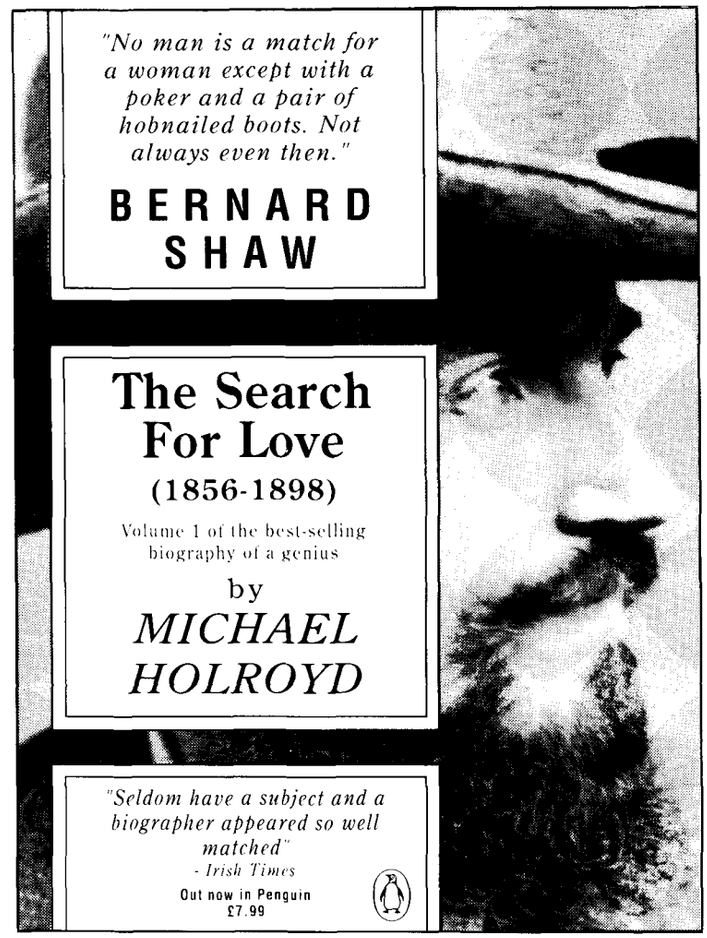
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Boris Iakovlev's painting of Marshal Zhukov, from "Totalitarian Art" (reviewed on page 33)

Playing God

SPY SINKER
Len Deighton
Hutchinson £13.99

Albert Hunt

"You like to play God," Bernard Samson's girlfriend, Gloria, tells him in the third book in what was billed as Len Deighton's trilogy, *Game, Set and Match*. Now, in the third book of yet another trilogy, *Hook, Line and Sinker*, which describes the continued destruction of Bernard Samson's career as a secret agent for London Central, Deighton himself plays God. In all the earlier books, Samson has been the narrator. We only see events from his own limited point of view. But in *Spy Sinker*, Len Deighton becomes the narrator. From a God-like position, which enables him to see into the minds of his characters, he not only explains everything that has happened in the first five books, but also gives us the real low-down on what led to the demoliton of the Berlin Wall. It all began, apparently, as long ago as February 1978.

"It's a ten-year plan," London Central's US import, Bret Rensselaer, tells the Director General. "The Wall comes down in 1988? Is that what you're saying?" asks the DG. "I don't want to be too specific..." says Bret modestly. But we can't help noticing that he's only a year out.

The plan is to put a double agent into East Berlin, someone who will mastermind an East German brain-drain, which will destroy the DDR by ruining its economy. The DG decides that the double agent will be Bernard Samson's wife, Fiona, who also works for London Central. Bret deduces that the DG chooses Fiona because it gives an excuse not to promote Bernard—maverick outsider, non-public school, non-Oxbridge—to the German desk. The DG's irrefutable logic also dictates that Bernard must never know the reason for Fiona's apparent betrayal. He spends five volumes stumbling from one conjecture to another. Once we've been let into the secret, we realise that we've been stumbling after him. *Sinker* sent me rushing back to the other books to check up on the details. Everything slots together beautifully—Len Deighton has done as professional a job as Bernard Samson ever did. And you've got to hand it to him when you realise that what gave him the solution to his own plot—the demolition of the Wall—only happened late last year. (How much rewriting did he have to do?)

For Bernard Samson fans, the book will be a must, though personally I prefer Deighton when he's not playing God. He pretends to show us what Fiona is thinking and feeling, but, significantly, he doesn't try and make her a narrator. He tends to manipulate her in the way that Bret, the DG and the ghoulish old Silas Gaunt do.

Manipulation, rather than the Berlin Wall, is what these books are about—that and the way what Bernard calls "marital, professional and political" betrayals are enmeshed. Deighton shows us a world in which people of power use and destroy other people for their own selfish ends, in the name of political principle. The appetite for power games wasn't destroyed with the Wall. Addicts of Len Deighton, of whom I am one, will be wondering where on earth his explorations of intrigue and treachery will take him next. Events since last winter's east European spring suggest that he won't be stuck for material.

Honouring Naomi

NAOMI MITCHISON: A BIOGRAPHY
Jill Benton
Pandora £15.95

Dea Birkett

Many different relationships develop between a biographer and her subject. The biographer can attempt to maintain academic distance or become as intimate as a friend. She may even feel the boundaries between her own life and that of her subject blur. Another may see her role as that of a disciple reclaiming a neglected hero. Benton unashamedly belongs to this latter group, coming to Naomi Mitchison as a "passionate student" and "a woman especially bent on honouring the lives of those accomplished

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women writers short-changed by literary history".

Naomi Mitchison: a biography is the story of "a remarkable writer" who "predates Doris Lessing" and has pursued a lifelong "quest for her Just Society". Benton is anxious to provide evidence of Mitchison's deep egalitarianism. We are asked to admire the distinguished writer for doing such everyday things as using the London Underground, and for occasionally inviting miners and homosexuals to her soirées. The Mitchison home, says Benton, was a "class melting-pot". The author is impressed when her subject washes mud off her hands from pulling potatoes before taking up her pen to write. (A photograph of Mitchison, now aged 93, digging up her vegetable patch covers the back jacket.)

Naomi Mitchison's life has indeed been both brave and extraordinary. Born into the distinguished scientific Haldane family, she wrote her first novel, *The Conquered*, in the 1920s on a board resting on her son's pram as she walked him along the Embankment. Establishing herself as a writer of women's quest and historical novels, and more recently science fiction, she campaigned around issues as diverse as contraception, nuclear disarmament and fishermen's rights. At the age of 18 she married the eminently suitable Dick Mitchison, a wealthy young soldier training in law; she had five children by him, and the devoted couple developed an experimental open relationship. "She came to believe," Benton writes with no hint of humour, "that as a socialist gesture she should share her body sexually with others."

This gushing feminist biography fails to highlight the contradictions that make Naomi Mitchison's life so provocative. Society hostess *and* committed socialist, Mitchison pulled potatoes in Scotland and then proudly showed off her muscles to her London dressmaker. "I hope," she wrote in a private letter in 1928, "my children won't choose 'respectable' professions"—yet she sent her son to Winchester College. Though she took out an advertisement in *The Times* when her husband entered the House of Lords in 1965, declaring she did not want to be known as Lady Mitchison, she uses her title to hasten such tiring tasks as ordering airline tickets.

Carradale, Mitchison's home for the last 40 years, is a splendid laird's manor on the Mull of Kintyre. When I stayed there several years ago, an expedition was organised to go salmon fishing. We were all issued with wellingtons and waterproofs and told to rendezvous at the back door at 10pm. Naomi Mitchison, several members of her large family and myself tramped down to the beach. We stood by while three local fishermen went out in their boat, trawled their net, caught a fish, and brought it back to the shore, where they bludgeoned it to death at their laird's feet. We all walked back to the Big House. Not even the tips of my wellingtons were wet.

The next evening we ate the salmon at the grand table, congratulating ourselves on *our* fine catch. In the 1980s, people still dressed for dinner at Carradale. "Did you enjoy salmon fishing?" someone asked.

No one seemed to be aware of the irony. Benton never points to it. Yet these jarring juxtapositions tell us more about Mitchison than any "honouring". Rooted in the Fabianism and feminism of the first half of this century, she has both battled against and shared in upper-middle-class privilege. Naomi Mitchison's awkward, multi-faceted life has proved too uncomfortable for a biographer who seeks to look up to her subject rather than into her.

Boulders, mud and sand

THE CONTROL OF NATURE
John McPhee
Hutchinson Radius £16.99

Bernard Dixon

"Red hot lava—moving with the inexorability of a tide—was threatening a town and a harbour on an offshore island. The vent was a nascent volcano. As the entire nation watched on television, a small crew with fire hoses squirted the front of the lava, producing billows of steam."

"The Mississippi River has jumped here and there within an arc about 200 miles wide, like a pianist playing with one hand—frequently and radically changing course, surging over the left or right bank to go off in utterly new directions. Always it is the river's purpose to get to the Gulf by the shortest and steepest gradient."

"It sounded like the roar of a jet engine. It filled the gym up with mud, and with boulders two and three feet in diameter. It went out through the south doors and spread all over the football field and track. Chain-link fencing was sheared off—like it had been cut with a welder. The place looked like a war zone."

Citing these passages is the only way in which one can hope to convey the essence of this unusual and even peculiar book. Culled from the three stories that comprise John McPhee's portrait of humans grappling with the elemental forces of planet Earth, they also illustrate the quality of his prose—now graphic simplicity, now gee-whiz, now didactic metaphor. As instantly digestible as a Desmond Bagley novel, and with much the same pace, *The Control of Nature* is otherwise impossible to categorise. If they do find the right shelf at the airport, it could sell lots of copies.

McPhee's purpose is to describe the formidable difficulties confronting humans living and working in dangerous and inhospitable places —and (though this comes from dustjacket and publisher's blurb rather than the author himself) to ask, "Have we gone too far in our challenge to nature?" First, we are shown Icelanders, burning their boots as they struggle to combat volcanic magma as it engulfs their fishing town. They spray millions of gallons of water to cool and thus solidify the lava and slow its progress. A desperate tactic, but it works.

Next, McPhee recounts the Herculean efforts of the US Army Corps of Engineers in constructing a huge dam-cum-valve to maintain the Mississippi on its current course and prevent it from flowing to a new mouth 100 miles westwards. This, too, has been effective —though for how long remains in doubt. Third, there is the spectacle of "debris flow", the dreadful mix of boulders, mud and sand that cascades out of the mountains from time to time towards posh homesteads in the canyons of Los Angeles. Basin-like structures have been built to intercept the landslides, and they too work to some degree. Yet accidents still occur, and the residents still return to pick up the pieces and rebuild their houses afterwards.

All of this is recorded with the aid of lots of human interest and quotes, some panicky, some cool. There is also a sizeable chunk of palatably explained technology, from civil engineering to hydrodynamics, together with neat interpolations of history and economics. An odd feature is the cheerful absentmindedness which, for example, leaves the author suddenly announcing, after talking about Magnus Magnusson for 34 pages or so, that this is not the *Mastermind* MM but another of the clan.

But does all of this swirling water, cascading mud and glowing magma really indicate that engineers, hydrologists and volcanologists should pack up their equipment and relinquish control of difficult terrain; and that threatened populations should settle down in Barnstaple instead? I rather doubt it. Indeed, McPhee's book can be read just as easily as a tribute to technology and human fortitude, and as encouragement towards future conquests. I wonder why Hutchinson Radius chose to present it otherwise.

Symphony of doubt

HORSE CRAZY
Gary Indiana
Paladin £4.99 paperback/£12.95 hardback
WALTER WINCHELL: A NOVEL
Michael Herr
Chatto & Windus £12.99

Stephen Trombley

In spite of the frequency with which it is done, writing about love is just about the most difficult job a novelist can tackle. The writers who have done it well in our century—Gide, Proust, Mann, Colette—are conspicuously neither British nor American. *Horse Crazy*, the first novel by the American short-story writer and columnist Gary Indiana, is one of the best novels written about love in the postwar era. The fact that it is about the sexual obsession of one man for another detracts not a jot from its author's success in translating the tiniest gestures of the beloved and the smallest suspi-

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cions of the lover into the symphony of doubt which must accompany obsessive love.

Gary Indiana's novel avoids being a study in precocious sensitivity; and it avoids the tempting trap of heralding a new *fin de siècle* preciousness. Because of this it has a double importance: not only for the place it deserves to command in the history of serious writing about love; but also for the quiet, though devastating, challenge it poses to the absurd and empty excesses of "postmodern" fiction. Ignoring the mindlessly nihilistic Acker bilge which New Yorkers and Londoners alike take comfort in, Gary Indiana presents a character who searches desperately for meaning in an age-old situation designed to deny it: a beautiful other who is selfish, drug addicted, deluded and cruel, vainly pursued by someone who is infinitely superior in every way (with the possible exception of physical beauty, and that only for a while).

Gary Indiana's theme may be a bit old-fashioned, but *Horse Crazy* is written against the background of a decade-long history of Aids, and this sets it apart from other great works of love. Infidelity in Colette is a painful business; but suspected infidelity in Indiana feels deadly, and not only because one might catch Aids.

Walter Winchell by Michael Herr is a rejected screenplay packaged as a novel, with an intriguing authorial apology at the front. The copyright in the work is held by MGM/UA Communications Company rather than Herr, which suggests that the history of this script turned into a novel may not be an entirely happy one.

Herr, whose *Dispatches* is one of the best books of reportage to come out of any war, went on to co-write the scripts for *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now*. He is a scriptwriter with a proven sense of the cinematic, and one who gives language an equal place with pictures. Indeed, the great strengths of *Walter Winchell* are its dialogue and monologue: the fizzing repartee and irrepressible mouth of Winchell, king of the Broadway gossip columnists who, with the rise of Hitler, became an early critic of Nazi imperialistic aims.

Much of the action takes place from Winchell's notorious Table 50 at the Stork Club, and there are some lovely cameos from Damon Runyon, Ernest Hemingway, Ed Sullivan and others; and there are deft, dramatic moments which sketch the amusing, exasperating and, ultimately, clapped-out character of Walter Winchell.

But as the book proceeds, one feels that, as a movie, it leaves itself nowhere to go. Herr is fond of attempting montages of action and simultaneous response—for instance, Winchell broadcasting, and us watching some of the audience that tunes in in 50 million living rooms. This usually leads to a crude split-screen device in film; in cartoons, a split frame can handle it less awkwardly; by far the most elegant solution comes from the medium of writing.

While Herr's *Winchell* probably does fail as a film, it amuses as a book, and gives moments of sheer joy. Whether or not it is a novel is another matter; perhaps it is enough that the jacket says it is.

From wimp to super Albie

THE SOFT VENGEANCE OF A FREEDOM FIGHTER
Albie Sachs
Grafton Books £13.99

Suzanne Cronje

Albie Sachs, as most South Africans will know, is an ANC lawyer whose car was blown up in Mozambique two years ago. He lost an arm and the sight of one eye, and sustained many other serious injuries. He recovered, if that is the right word: on the evidence of this book it might be more accurate to say he was reborn—liberated in a very personal way.

The title is misleading. Albie's life is, of course, deeply rooted in the ANC, and those who wish to know how a white liberal fits into the struggle will find some interesting revelations. But this is not primarily a political book. It is a compelling story of a narcissistic wimp who became a one-armed hero.

People who tend to identify themselves with the victims of terrorism will take some comfort from this account. Albie's reaction immediately after the explosion was, "Oh, shit, I must have banged my head." His experience, he later reflected, helped him to resolve a question he had asked himself daily since a South African letter-bomb killed his friend, Ruth First—did she realise the instant the bomb went off what was happening? "I think I know the answer now, and mercifully it is: no."

His own return to consciousness and, after long hospitalisation, to full life, apparently contained more euphoria than pain. Naturally, this is his own account, which tends to picture with Jewish humour and a certain amount of self-mockery a super-Albie. His first use of the commode was a victory over his enemies; from the terror of standing on his own feet he trained himself to jog and swim again. Was he still capable of sex? Of course he was, and he tells how the act differs for a one-armed man. Touching, sexual or otherwise, is both important and healing: this is a constant theme of the book.

So is the importance of body-shape to all human relations. He describes an outing to the rose garden in London's Regent's Park on a warm day. Sitting on the bench, he had to make what he describes as a decision with major implications for his future. Should he take off his tracksuit top? "My arm is chopped off and ugly..." Has he the right to impose the image of his mutilated limb on people who have come "to enjoy visual tranquillity and not to be confronted by ugliness"? His intuition is "timid but sure": he exposes his stump. People walk by as before, not paying any more or any less attention, he notes. At a later stage, he decides against wearing a prosthesis because it would only be of cosmetic value.

The book is written with a sure and easy touch which suggests that Albie Sachs would have made a good novelist had he not devoted himself to freedom fighting, the law and the protection of human rights. He is now back in South Africa with the ANC, helping to draw up a constitution. In doing so, I hope he will not forget the un-South African optimism he expressed when he wrote that he looked forward to the day "when the wimps and the wets and the weak inherit the earth".

The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs, *first published in 1966, has just been reissued in paperback by Paladin at £4.99*

Divergence syndromes

BRAZZAVILLE BEACH
William Boyd
Sinclair-Stevenson £13.95

Sean French

A recent interviewer of William Boyd cited Martin Amis's statement that he never wanted to produce a single sentence that anyone else could have written. The implication may have been that Boyd's prose can be a bit anonymous. Boyd replied cogently that Amis's style left him with the problem of managing all the routine bits that join novels together, the getting out of cars, picking up the phone and so on.

There are no such problems in Boyd's fiction. "Readable" is not a term I like using, but it applies supremely and irresistibly to novels such as *The New Confessions* and *Stars and Bars*. With his new book, Boyd has set himself some tricky technical challenges. The book is principally narrated in the first person by a woman, Hope Clearwater. It contains two plots which are also interwoven with a sustained exposition of various concepts in modern mathematics. The subject may be indeterminacy but Boyd writes novels of Newtonian lucidity. The reader always knows what's going on, can tell the characters apart, can understand what points are being made. Reading this novel is like being driven in comfort with the certainty of arriving at a recognisable destination.

Hope is lying on a beach in East Africa (Boyd doesn't tell us which one, but the civil war that is in progress suggests Mozambique), meditating principally on two episodes in her life which are told to us concurrently. The first is the story of her marriage to John Clearwater, a brilliant but unstable mathematician. He is working at the forefront of modern mathematical attempts to find theorems for generating indeterminacy.

Hope herself is an ethologist. She has developed a method of dating hedgerows by counting the species of plant in them (which sounds dangerously familiar for a supposedly new idea). Then, after her marriage to John broke up, she moved to East Africa to be part of a major team studying a colony of chimpanzees. The whole project is based on the apes' notions

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of cooperation but, as the novel begins, Hope starts to notice disturbing signs of brutal violence between them. Meanwhile a civil war rages around them.

The alternating episodes from Hope's life are also accompanied by short sections describing modern mathematical ideas which, Hope feels, relate to her own life. "Divergence syndromes", for example, occur when what is thought to be a constant suddenly behaves erratically. "Fermat's Last Theorem" is known to be true but seems impossible to prove.

The use of indeterminacy in science as a literary metaphor is becoming so familiar as to be almost a cliché (it occurs prominently in Ian McEwan's *A Child in Time* and Tom Stoppard's *Hapgood*, to name two of the more prominent examples), and in *Brazzaville Beach* it seems glib, and all the more so since the author never appears to question whether the comparison has any real meaning.

Nor does Boyd seem aware of the real note of indeterminacy in the highly organised world of his novel, and that is his own drag act as Hope Clearwater. I can think of no contemporary novelist so preoccupied with genitals—male, female and animal. In this novel the preoccupation is taken to an extreme and, when Boyd describes Hope fondling her own body or observing various male penises, we must read this in the knowledge that it is a man who is fantasising it.

That is a truly relevant divergence syndrome but there is no room for exploring the meaning of that in the book's own terms. William Boyd wants indeterminacy, just as long as he can determine it.

A woman of ideas

THE LIFE AND REBELLIOUS TIMES OF CICELY HAMILTON: ACTRESS, WRITER AND SUFFRAGIST
Lis Whitelaw
The Women's Press £6.95

Joy Melville

Writing the life of Cicely Hamilton had its drawbacks, as her biographer admits: she left no private papers; no diaries, no letters from friends—only "one of the most uninformative autobiographies ever written." Playwright, actress, feminist and political activist, her life was recorded only in printed works and public utterances. Her private affairs remained full of gaps, silences and unexplained mysteries.

Her upbringing had made her into a woman of ideas, not sentiment. Born in 1872, the eldest of four children, she had an impoverished childhood. Her father, a military man, was a poor provider, and her mother, whom she loved, simply disappeared when Cicely was about ten. Her father went abroad with his regiment, and the children, boarded out, were treated so cruelly by a foster mother that Cicely tried to kill herself. It left her with a lifelong desire to improve the lot of those around her and anger at the romanticised image of marriage and motherhood.

Two aunts provided a home for the children, becoming the nucleus of Cicely's life. She felt an intense loyalty to her own sex and traced many of her ideas and feelings about women and marriage back to her relationships with her mother, her nurse and her aunts. Always independent in thought, she resented the restricted life women led, the snide remarks about spinsters and the assumption that marriage was woman's destiny. Not long after she started to earn her living as a pupil-teacher at 18, she gave it up in order to work in the more liberal atmosphere of the theatre.

The next ten years were to be hard and lonely. The only work was with touring companies and, travelling round the country, she experienced the harsh realities of life for a woman on her own, being thrown out on several occasions to make room for the manager's mistress.

It was the beginning of her development as a feminist. Her passionate advocacy of birth control stemmed from the poverty she saw, and in later life she also attacked the emphasis on women's sexual attractions—she was scornful that a militant suffragette, out to smash windows, would probably be wearing a picture hat.

Her ideas were still formulating when she turned 30 and realised her future as an actress was bleak. Switching to writing, she initially tried romantic fiction but gave up, saying, "the utter sloppiness of the admired kind of heroine was apt to produce a mental nausea." Only after joining the suffrage campaign did she unleash her radical views, forcefully rejecting the stereotypes of womanhood in her book, *Marriage as a Trade*.

Those were heady days. She became a member of the Actresses' Franchise League and formed long-lasting relationships with other committed women. Together they wrote, collaborated and acted in plays that called for social justice for women, as well as the vote. Two of her closest friends were Edy Craig, Ellen Terry's daughter, and Chris St John, the woman with whom Edy lived.

Cicely, who died in 1952, had little time for men; but no correspondence remains to show whether she was sexually involved with any woman. After the prosecution for obscenity of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928, however, lesbianism came under such hostile scrutiny that associations were kept private. Edy Craig's letters were destroyed by Chris, for example, and though Vita Sackville-West called Edy "a tearing old lesbian", there is again no documentary evidence of Edy and Chris's relationship. When researching my own biography of Ellen and Edy, I asked Ellen Terry's grandson whether his aunt Edy was lesbian and he furiously refuted this.

Lis Whitelaw sensitively investigates Cicely Hamilton's private, as well as her public, life. Her biography does justice to a highly original thinker and fighter, who more than justifies her place in the suffragettes' roll of honour.

World weariness

REFLECTIONS 1923-1988
Graham Greene
Reinhardt Books £14.99

Adewale Maja-Pearce

"Amazing the amount of useless experience which can be gathered in a lifetime." Thus Graham Greene, not yet 30, in the opening sentence of an article, "Death in the Cotswolds"; but such world-weariness, imbibed so early, is hardly matched by the sudden optimism in an article on Vietnam, "Last Cards in Indo-China", written 20 years later:

"In Europe, a strong government is one with popular support; here, without elections and without real parties, a strong government is a group of individuals with a common aim and determination, free from corruption and free from the necessity of clinging to office for the sake of the perquisites."

I doubt that the author believes this for one moment: it is certainly not the world of *The Quiet American*, a world in which everyone is corrupted by the simple fact of their humanity, *especially* those who begin with the best motives.

Five articles on that tragic country are reproduced here, all of them published in various magazines at the time. Their only interest lies in what they tell us about a writer's working method, the way in which the raw material of experience is transmuted into fiction. In "A Memory of Indo-China", for instance, Greene describes what it was like to go on a bombing raid—"And it was the stomach that fell away, spiralling down like a suicide to the ground we had left"—but this is reproduced word for word in the novel.

The same is true of the pieces on two of the world's seediest, most corrupt countries. On Haiti: "Baron Samedi, in his top hat and tails, who haunts the cemeteries smoking a cigar and wearing dark glasses, spends the days, so some believe, in the Presidential Palace, and his other name is Dr Duvalier." And Liberia: "A quality of darkness was needed, of the inexplicable, something which has to be taken as a symbol because it has no obvious meaning for the conscious brain."

"Travel, like dreaming, is a form of emotional satisfaction," Greene tells us elsewhere, but this is surely putting it too strongly. A more familiar sentiment is his first thought when the bomber climbs over the Vietnamese jungle and he discovers that he's still alive: "For 40 seconds no worries had existed: even loneliness hadn't existed."

But if these articles are of interest because of the novels, the same cannot be said for the book reviews which take up roughly half the volume. Greene disliked the work—"so many books a week that were clearly food for the worms," as he puts it—and was thankful enough when Hollywood bought the rights to *Stamboul Train* in 1932: it enabled him to continue writing the novels that alone justify this collection.

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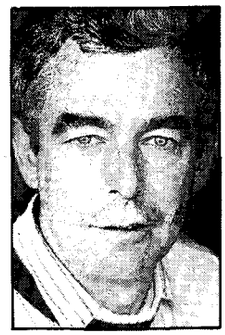
Back in the boot

Health authorities look set to race ahead of local councils in planning long-term care

"You'll be into obituaries now," said a health service colleague on the postponement of community care. Well, not exactly. One crucial element of community care has been the subject of a most serious accident, but it is not a fatality. This is public inquiry time, not an occasion for the coroner's court. Can the policy pick itself up and start all over again?



David Townsend

It probably won't happen under Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke's stewardship. His summer holiday was no doubt all the more welcome because of his last-minute, public defeat by the prime minister. Privately, he knew the game was up months before. By way of compensation, he now knows that a few dozen hospitals and health authority units have applied for self-governing status—the NHS management version of buying your own council house. There is even reported to be a discount. The public can now look forward to an NHS version of stone cladding, Georgian coach-lamps and Dickensian bow-windows at the lucky hospitals.

While the health service gears up for that particular journey without end, however, the reassessment of the community care proposals has to begin. It was obvious some time in the new year that the plan to transfer care responsibilities to local councils for April 1991 was going down with all hands. The reasons remain with us. Local authorities and Department of Health officials could not agree on the costs of setting up and running the new system. The gap became a bridging loan too far. The argument was compounded by the cost of the Children Act coming into effect in October 1991.

For example, local authorities estimated costs for the Children Act at an extra £50 million in 1991-2 rising to £140 million in 1992-3. The Department of Health figures were £20 million and £30 million respectively. For 1993, the department would give no figure to compare with a local authority claim of £145 million.

These sums and these differences were dwarfed by the estimated community care costs, wherever the department would quote any figures at all. It was prepared to accept, as a basis for discussion, local authority "infrastructure costs" at £350 million by 1993, but would not accept estimates of £550 million for the transfer of social security responsibility in the first year, subsequently estimated at nearly £2 billion annually by 1993-4. Sir Roy Griffiths said in his original report "doing nothing is not an option." Putting things off clearly was. But the basic questions are unresolved. Next year's community charge is too delicate to bear extra community care costs: how is it to be stronger in 1993?

Aside from the stalemate over who pays which bills, there are two structural problems developing in the relationship between health and local authorities. They affect the ability, and possibly the willingness, to plan things together. The first is the fall in land prices. As a result there is a low level of sales activity and a real depression in the commercial property market. It affects community care very directly.

There is a real depression in the commercial property market, which affects community care

A major plank in strategic thinking about reform in health and social services has been nailed to the notion of selling surplus land and redundant buildings to finance alternatives. In some parts of the country, the value of land per acre has fallen by up to half its 1988 value. Plans made up to then are at least delayed as a result. Local authorities, already strapped for capital by the government's regularly changing rules, cannot find buyers for surplus sites; or if they can, the selling price is inadequate.

In councils the arguments about capital are becoming fiercer. There is intense competition between housing, education and engineering departments. For housing, the question of homelessness is costing millions. The fall in sales of council houses means that capital is even more restricted. Schools, inadequately built and maintained for years, are in need of solid investment. Lastly, some urban roads and footways are increasingly an obstacle course for both springs and footwear, rather than the means for safe travel. Travelling in that company, social services do not even take a back seat. They are in the boot.

The second major problem concerns the way health and local authorities work. At present, the district general manager and the director of social services have a few things in common. Not the least is that they now work for their authorities as employees. After September 1991, as a result of the NHS Act, district general managers join the ranks of their employing authority. What is more, it will be an employing authority slimmed down to a First XI of other senior officers and hand-picked appointees. Gone will be the days when dissident councillors or maverick doctors could disrupt, delay or even achieve alternatives to official plans at health authority meetings.

The speed with which health authorities can get things done, closed or changed, will increase. Local authorities, as "democratic" organisations with elaborate committee and consultative procedures, will not be able to keep up. By the time joint plans are agreed, the health service, pressed to balance books, cut waiting lists and reach targets, will have gone it alone. The trend is already there.

Joint planning agreements are less likely to be made by 1993 than they are now, although there are no indications that joint finance will be wound up. It is important, and it has been a useful tool to oblige some joint planning between health and local authorities. But, increasingly, local authorities have found the proposals they put up to develop services for the major priority groups—elderly, mentally handicapped and mentally ill people—have been faced with "competition" from health authority schemes to use the same joint finance, which varies in amount from authority to authority. It could be £500,000 per annum, or £2 million. Small in the scale of things—but with desperate remedies required by some health authorities to keep in the black; a useful crock of gold.

With the senior health officers to become employers, it is odds on that this trend will harden. Opposition from local authorities will be weaker because the money is, in effect, a temporary transfer. After a few years, the cost of schemes could well fall to the local authority. Here come those community charge arguments again. For these reasons, the introduction of full community care may be a great deal further off than 1993. With a general election before then, we seem to be going up the down escalator.

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VOLUNTEER NOTICE BOARD is a free service provided by New Statesman & Society with financial assistance from Thames Television's Help programme. Interested organisations are invited to send their copy (approximately 45 words) to Dawn King at New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DQ by Friday preceding publication date. Please note this service is for recruiting volunteers only. If you have salaried vacancies contact the Classified Department on 071-739-1645.

TWO SMALL CHARITIES in Cambridge working with people with learning difficulties would welcome some-one with business background to help fundraise and evolve a market strategy for our useful goods. Expenses and honorarium paid. Please contact Peter Durrant on 0223 262759/ 68040 at any time.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE in Southwark is looking for volunteers to work with people with a learning difficulty, to enable them to enjoy their recreation time. Training & support given. Call Geoff Jones 071 703 0261.

BUILD A RELATIONSHIP and watch it grow. Some children have no-one else who really listens to them. Some have little contact with a positive male figure. Join our volunteer group, men & women, and get to know one of these children. If you are interested, live within reach of Islington, and have 2/3 hours a week to spare, contact Span on 071 250 1223.

INDEPENDENT Living Alternatives promotes independence for people disabled. At present we urgently need women who can drive. Helpers provide physical support in return for free board and lodgings plus £40 per week. If you want to become part of a progressive London based community initiative, contact us at: Independent Living Alternatives, Fulton Hse, Fulton Rd, Empire Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 OTF. 081 902 8998 ext 270.

LEWISHAM Befrienders would like to hear from local people who could give a few hours each week to help youngsters whose only other contact with adults may be remote figures in authority. All interested contact Leonard Davis Co-ordinator, Lewisham Befrienders, London SE8 4AU. Tel: (081) 692-0236.

SOUTHWARK VICTIM Support Scheme. We visit victims of crome and help them emotionally and practically. We rely on volunteers for this work and need new volunteers to join us. Interested? A training course for new volunteers is starting on 2nd October and we are looking for people living or working in Southwark. Those with language skills are especially welcome. Tel. 071 701 2677 for information.

SOUTH WEST SURREY - local volunteers wanted for HELP-LINE being launched for carers of people with mental health problems. Volunteers work from home, must have a phone and preferably experience of caring. Contact Margaret, Guildford (0483) 578269 for further details. The number given on 10th August was incorrect, sorry. Helpline, not yet fully operational, is (0483) 38936.

ARE YOU LOOKING for sales, delivery or driving experience? Would you help people choose the furniture they need or perhaps help us to deliver it? Homestore (based in Bow, Tower Hamlets) helps people unable to purchase basic household goods by collecting and distributing donated items. We need two more helpers. Expenses paid. Call Mike Jenn of the BIA on 071-250 1193.

LONDON HOSPITAL Bereavement Service seeks Co-ordinator. Good admin./organisational and typing work under own initiative. Some work from home necessary. You will be a member of the LHBS voluntary team and good support is available. 20 hours per week. Phone 071 247 1209 for application form.

A FUNDRAISING ASSISTANT is needed urgently to help with an exciting new clothes project and similar event organising. Expenses paid. Contact Anna at Women's Environmental Network 071-490 2511.

UNITED NATIONS Association is seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help out with general campaigning work in its rapidly expanding Youth and Student Dept. Please telephone Tony Samphier on 071 930 2932 for further details.

BONDWAY NIGHTSHELTER, an emergency provision for homeless men, requires volunteers (aged 18-30) to work for approximately six months. An allowance and accommodation provided. We recruit throughout the year, so welcome applications from those wishing to be considered at a later stage. For further details contact please contact: Volunteer Coordinator, PO Box 374, London, SW8 1SJ and enclose S.A.E.

THE PARKINSON'S DISEASE Society, through its local branches seeks to help sufferers with the problems arising from the affliction and to provide funding for medical research to find a cure for the disease. Our branches need volunteers to help in this vital work. Contact Rodney Wolfe Coe 081-852 4337

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU in Lancashire seeks volunteer advice workers. All training is provided. Time commitment of 6 hours per week. We are handling a growing debt and social security appeal caseload, and are keen to develop outreach services in the community. Expenses paid. If you are interested in challenging and varied work for further information contact Derek King on 0254 385043. Hyndburn Area C.A.B., 20-22, Whalley Road, Accrington BB5 1AA.

THAMES HELP

Thames Help, presented by Jackie Spreckley, is a four minute local social action programme. It appears four times a week on Thames Televison at 5.55 approximately (check TV Times for details). Here is a summary of this week's programmes.

This week we are launching our new London Disability Guide. It's been published by GLAD in association with Freemans

Monday 17th September – The Islington Disablement Association

Last year the Islington Disablement Association's specialist advice project managed to get an extra £30,000 worth of unclaimed benefit for people with disabilities in Islington. Despite successes like this Islington Council are threatening to cut its funding. We talk to Marie Pye, one of the workers whose job is in doubt.

Tuesday 18th September – Community Care

Katherine Arrienello needs 24 hour care, and until she moved into an Independent Living Scheme in Greenwich, this was provided largely by voluntary help. She now receives funding to employ her own carers, and as she says herself, the difference to her life is enormous. "I can honestly say I'm happy with my life. I'm living now, whereas before I was just existing."

Wednesday 19th September – Artists' View

In the last three years London has seen the development of a blossoming disability arts scene. Tonight we look at the work of one of those artists, singer/songwriter Mike Higgins, who is blind. Mike is currently recording a tape of his own songs.

Thursday 20th September – Campaign for Accessible Transport

On 4th July this year a No. 7 bus brought the traffic in Central London to a complete standstill. A group of people with disabilities from the Campaign for Accessible Transport decided the only way they could catch the bus was to sit down in front of it. We talk to Steve Cribb, one of the campaign's organisers.

All this week we are offering our new London Disability Guide. Phone 071 388 8282 for your copy.

The regular Monday lunchtime edition of THAMES HELP not only previews the week's programmed but also has regular features of its own including a COMMUNITY ACTION SLOT and a VOLUNTEER NOTICEBOARD, compiled in conjunction with this page.

THAMES TELEVISION

Thames Help, Thames Television PLC, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL. Telephone: 01-387 9494.

THE SURVIVORS' NETWORK (Brighton) provides a telephone helpline and group meetings for women who have been sexually abused in childhood. We would welcome more trained counsellors (women) for the helpline and to offer individual or group sessions regularly. For details call Carole 0273 550534 or write to Survivors' Network, Box 188 Brighton BN1 7JW.

LOCAL TO WANDSWORTH? Interested in one-to-one work with a teenager who's been 'cautioned' by police? Aims: to keep teenagers out of court, offer non-authority support etc. Training, supervision, basic expenses for vols. Approx. 1 eve/afternoon p/w. Wandsworth Befrienders Scheme, 177 Blackshaw Road, Tooting, London SW17. Tel: 081 672 3021.

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Appointments

NYCS Norfolk Youth and Community Service

DIVISIONAL YOUTH AND COMMUNITY OFFICER

HELLESDON — PB 391

JNC Level 3, Points 1–4: £15,255 — £16,617
(pay award pending)
(plus mortgage subsidy in approved cases)

This challenging post requires an experienced JNC Qualified Youth Worker, to develop youth work in the Hellesdon area, on the North West outskirts of Norwich.

The person appointed will have responsibility for the Hellesdon Youth and Community Centre and the Eagle Canoe Centre (a specialist centre within the division). The successful applicant need not have a canoeing qualification.

This post encompasses a division which is a mixture of city suburbs and rural areas.

Interviews for shortlisted candidates will be held on 1st and 2nd November, 1990.

Application forms and further details available on receipt of a self addressed envelope 32 x 23 cm (no stamp needed) to the County Education Officer, Room 7, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DL.

Please quote reference PB 391.

Closing date: 8th October, 1990.

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND PSYCHOLOGY

Applications are invited for **teaching appointments** in the Department of Social Work and Psychology.

Social Work
Candidates should possess a PhD degree in Social Work and relevant teaching experience, particularly in either group work theory and practice or community development. Additional experience in one or more of the following areas will be an advantage:

Design and Application of Group Therapy
Direct Fieldwork Practicum
Family Social Work and Family Therapy
Interpersonal Practice
Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

Psychology
Candidates should possess a PhD degree in Psychology and have teaching experience at University level. They should also have specialised experience equipping them to teach in one or more of the following areas:

Cognitive Psychology
Health Psychology
Industrial Psychology
Occupational Psychology
Educational Psychology
Physiological Psychology
Psychological Testing and Measurement
The Use of Statistical Methods in Psychology

Experience in one or more of the following will be an additional advantage:
Applications of Psychology
On-line Use of Computers in Teaching Psychology

Besides appointments on normal three-year contracts, visiting appointments for one or two years will also be considered.

Gross annual emoluments range as follows:

Lecturer	S$50,390 - 64,200
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(STG£1.00 = S$3.43 approximately)

The commencing salary will depend on the candidate's qualifications, experience and the level of appointment offered.

Leave and medical benefits will be provided. Depending on the type of contract offered, other benefits may include: provident fund benefits or an end-of-contract gratuity, a settling-in allowance of S$1,000 or S$2,000, subsidised housing at nominal rentals ranging from S$100 to S$216 p.m., education allowance for up to three children subject to a maximum of S$10,000 per annum per child, passage assistance and baggage allowance for the transportation of personal effects to Singapore. Staff members may undertake consultation work, subject to the approval of the University, and retain consultation fees up to a maximum of 60% of their gross annual emoluments in a calendar year.

The Department of Social Work and Psychology is a department in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. There are 8 faculties in the National University of Singapore with a current student enrolment of some 14,000. All departments are well-equipped with a wide range of facilities for teaching and research.

All academic staff have access to the following computer and telecommunication resources: an individual microcomputer (an IBM AT-compatible or Apple Macintosh); an IBM mainframe computer with 16 MIPS of computing power; an NEC SX supercomputer with 650 MFLOPS of computing power; departmental laser printers; a wide spectrum of mainframe and microcomputer software; voice-mail; BITNET to access academic institutions world-wide. An on-line library catalogue is also available. In addition, a proposed campus network based on state-of-the-art optical fibre technology will be installed by the end of 1990 to facilitate resource sharing and electronic communication for the academic community.

Application forms and further information on terms and conditions of service may be obtained from:

The Director
Personnel Department
National University of Singapore
10 Kent Ridge Crescent
Singapore 0511

NUS Overseas Office
Singapore High Commission
(Students Department)
16 Kinnerton Street
London SW1X 8ES, U.K.
Tel: (071) 235-4562.

Enquiries may also be sent through BITNET to: PERJC at NUS3090, or through Telefax: (65) 7783948.

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COMMUNITY LEISURE DEPARTMENT

DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (BLACK & OTHER MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS)

SECOND HALF JOB SHARE
FLOOR 2, 33 WINE STREET, BRISTOL.

SALARY: PO (1 - 4) £16,014 – £17,271 per annum, pro-rata.
HOURS: 16 per week. (negotiable)

The Department has recently been re-structured with a view to promoting the principles of community development in all areas of its work. This post is part of a team of County Professional staff with a remit for the development of policy and support targetted at the voluntary sector. Within this team, this post will involve, via consultation, the development of a coherent strategy for developing and supporting Black and other Minority Ethnic Groups in the community.

For an informal discussion please contact Haroon Saad, Community Development and Equal Opportunities Officer

Telephone: Bristol (0272) 290777 Ext.6363.

In addition to the salary quoted we can offer you a range of benefits including a minimum of 21 days annual leave with extra leave at most bank holidays, generous sickness and maternity schemes and the opportunity to join an excellent pension scheme. If invited for interview we will reimburse your expenses including (in appropriate cases) the cost of providing for the care of dependant children/relatives.

Applications by form only, available with further details from:

Director of Personnel Services,
P.O. Box 270, Avon House, The Haymarket, BRISTOL BS99 7HE.

or telephone Bristol 298565 (answering machine on this number after office hours.)

Please quote reference number CML/23009/M6 when asking for forms which must be returned by the specified closing date.

The closing date for this post is 28th September 1990

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Avon as an Equal Opportunities employer considers applicants on their suitability for the post, regardless of sex, race, disability or sexual orientation.

Avon
COUNTY COUNCIL

Working with Young Offenders in southern Africa

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Applicants should have CQSW and at least 5 years' experience of probation work, with at least 2 years involvement with Community Service Orders, preferably at policy and planning level.

SKILLSHARE AFRICA provides a 2 year contract, modest salary, return flights, free housing, NI contributions, medical cover, language training where necessary and a locally-based Skillshare Africa staff for support.

For applications contact: **Recruitment/Selection Unit**
Skillshare Africa, 3 Belvoir St. LEICESTER LE1 6SL
Tel: (0533) 541862 Telex: 9312131159 (CG G) Fax No. (0533) 542614.

Skillshare AFRICA

Closing Date for applications: 8 Oct 90 **Please quote ref: NSS/9/90**

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If you can work under pressure and are interested in providing a service for Camden's more difficult and disadvantaged young people, then this is the post for you.

Application form from and to be returned to, Social Services, Departmental Personnel Unit, Willing House, 356/364 Gray's Inn Road, London WCIX 8BH. Tel: 071-837 5621 (ansaphone) quoting Ref. 10/145/NS. Closing date 28th September 1990.

Camden Services

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Applicants are considered on the basis of their suitability for the post, with equal opportunities for women, black/ethnic minorities, lesbians and gay men and people with disabilities, and regardless of marital status, age, creed, religion and unrelated criminal conviction. All posts are open for job-sharing.

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The London Adventure Playground Association, is a unique grouping of 42 community-based playgrounds. We wish to develop our support for local playworkers and management committees.

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Please call for access information. Send A4 SAE (37p) for application form and information mentioning where you saw the advertisement.

Closing date: 24 September

LAPA, 279 Whitechapel Rd, E1 1BY: 071-377 0314.

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38 hrs pw. £14,300 pa: Closing date: 8th October, 1990.

Write for details to Leyton Green Neighbourhood Health Service, 180 Essex Road, London E10 6BT.

Tel: 081-539 0756.

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All replies with C.V. to the Secretary, C/o St. Vincent's Hospice, North Road, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland PA5 8NE. Telephone 0505 31858.

Closing date: September 21, 1990.

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Thursday 20th September

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Volunteers

NICARAGUA HEALTH FUND is looking for a volunteer to help two or more days a week in our small friendly office near Oxford Circus. Work is mainly administrative and is routine but varied. Training given and no experience needed. Travel expenses within London paid and as much tea and coffee as you can drink. Ring 071 580 4292 and ask for Joy or Sarah.

COULD YOU ORGANISE a Sponsored Swim? The Nicaragua Health Fund is looking for a person or small group of people to organise this fundraising, fun and fitness feat. Ring 071 580 4292 and ask for Joy to find out more.

Holiday/Travel

CHRISTMAS DODGERS come with us to Greece: Walking on Naxos £464 - £495. Mycenaen Greece £695 - £745. Eleven days departing 21st December. Tel: Ariadne 0379 852 945 (24 hours).

THE GAMBIA: Budget B & B in thatched huts, lovely location. Tel 081 505 7396.

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Agenda Wed 19 Sept

LABOUR'S EDUCATION POLICY, Liz Monck. At 7.30 pm, Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth St, SW1. Central London Fabian Society. All welcome.

Lectures

CHRISTOPHER HILL will be delivering the second Leslie Morton Memorial Lecture "Eve and the Equality of the Sexes" a 17th Century Approach. Saturday Sept 29: 2:30 pm. Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green E.C.1. Tickets: £1.00 at door.

Booksellers

SCARCE BOOK SERVICE. Hammersmith Books, Liffords Place, SW13 9LR. Phone 081 876 7254, (24hrs).

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HAPPY, MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, own house, garden, interesting jobs (almost), charming teenagers, seeks unattached man for weekend outings. Music-lover essential, especially jazz. N. London. Box (34) 423.

EVENING CLASS ANGST? Instead go instinctual with street living, country-loving man. You're 30s, fit, solvent, Yorkshire based. Box (34) 430.

ATTRACTIVE ANGLO-ITALIAN MALE, 30, into politics, theatre, film, sport, travel and consumerism seeks lively female for caring, sharing love and laughter. London. Photo, telephone appreciated. Write Box (33) 415.

ASIAN INDIAN GIRL; 29 years; practising Jehovahs Witness; working in London. Wishes to contact sincere Jehovahs Witness with view to marriage. Please write to Box (32) 410.

CAN ANYONE convince this lively, leftish, attractive male television producer (39) that there are intelligent, slim, warm, unattached women (under 40) left in London? Photo/tel. please. Reply to Box (34) 431.

RED/GREEN MALE (33) post-doc seeks sensuous female in touch with feelings. Oxford/London. Interests nature, walking, politics, literature, eating out, talking, touching, caring, sharing. Long term commitment. If compatible also children. Please write long letter to Box (32) 387.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 36, W. Yorks based. Many interests including walking, cycling, the arts and greenish politics. Seeks non smoking, thirties female to share similar interests and sincere relationship. Please reply Box (32) 407.

WELL-EDUCATED, ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, 41, lively, musical, wishes to be tempted by a sensitive, imaginative and cultured man into new adventures. Please write to Box (32) 409.

SOULMATE SOUGHT, lively-minded, interesting man with joie-de-vivre, keen on books, music, walking, travel for similar woman, early fifties. Home Counties west. Box (34) 428.

ATTRACTIVE, WARM, unconventional lady (mid 40s) in visual arts, tired of kissing frogs. Seeks cultured, fun loving, thoughtful prince (44-54) to share laughter, friends, theatre and silences. Photo please. Clwyd. Box (34) 429.

"OLD FRIENDS", five years of civilised introduction for the over 40s: A countrywide service with a personal touch. Details from Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, London N5 2DB. Tel 071-226 5432.

BLACK GUY, 24 with a noble heart. Seeks a fun, attractive, intelligent, plumpish older woman for roses, wine, more? Write to Box (32) 404.

INTERESTING WOMAN, 34, looking for grown man. London area. Please reply Box (35) 351.

MALE, 35, considered presentable and creative, seeks female to continue search for meaning in life and to share pleasing experiences. W. Yorks area. Please write to Box (35) 436.

WARM, BRIGHT, ATTRACTIVE, independent woman (46) with cultural leanings would love to meet cheerful, affectionate, non stereotype man to share theatre, music and maybe long term relationship eventually. Manchester area. Please reply to Box (35) 437.

CENTRAL SCOTLAND: Man, 38, NS & Guardian reader &c, seeks woman. Write Box (35) 438.

I'M 30 (FEMALE), living in Hampshire and looking for someone (male) to share film, theatre, eating out - and more? I'm confident, sociable, intelligent - drop me a line! Reply to Box (35) 349.

WOULD AMIABLE WIDOWER/DIVORCE NS, without ego and emotional baggage join forces with divorcee, optimistic 55, happy in hills, old towns, appreciates quality in people. North. Box (35) 350.

PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMAN 49, 6ft, English, seeks tall slim female under 45 for intimate friendship, London area. Photo/phone no. essential. Please write to Box (35) 351.

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ENDGAMES

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 3142 (previously misnumbered) Set by P S Burton
Further interviews by A N Wilson in the *Spectator* of famous people, alive or dead, who reveal a side to their character you suspected but which has never been proven.

Report by Ms de Meaner

This week you divided yourselves into two groups: those who took the trouble to go and buy the *Spectator*, or hunt out some back issues—and actually *find out* how Wilson writes up his interviews—and those who didn't. My only problem was, aside from the ubiquitous Fagg, Moor, Greenwell and Prince, the rest of the *cognoscenti* were, not to put too fine a point on it, less than riveting. So, *in extremis*, and desperately trying to fill the space, I had to resort to Simon Herbertson whom I allowed to come in fifth. Fifteen pounds will soon be on their way to the winners, except for dear Simon who can make do with a tenner—*and* think himself lucky.

The most interesting fact I pondered over, while reading your entries, was how absolutely *rotten* the Kinnock interviews were. Now why is this? The conclusion I have reluctantly come to is that all your fantasies—likes Margaret Thatcher's economic policies, admires Thatcher's grit and determination, thinks the old Labour Party's finished—all seemed perfectly unsurprising and natural and, really, too depressing to print.

Well, all right, John Stanley: "I just love that girl. And, what's more, I think she's nearly always right. Now that does make my job difficult."

Self: Were you disappointed by the election results in 1960?
Nixon: Not at all. I lost deliberately.
Self: Was that easy?
Nixon: A little six o'clock shadow and a word with Daley. You see George Raft, Ronnie Reagan and I had always enjoyed the idea of concocting a really good conspiracy, something that would make a good film. Something more punchy than the Hiss case, which would bring in a good audience.
Self: I take it you're referring to *All the President's Men*...
Nixon: No, no, no. The Book Depository affair, what was the guy's name...
Self: You had Kennedy shot?
Nixon: On Castro's advice, of course. There was absolutely no way to advance the cause of world communism otherwise. Indeed, if it hadn't been for that clown Brezhnev, the American flag would be scarlet red already.
Self: But the Watergate tapes reveal you as something of an anti-communist.
Nixon: Convincing isn't it? If only my damn secretary hadn't kicked out the plug, you'd have heard something really sensational.
Self: Then you didn't order the plumbers and the burglars in?
Nixon: Sure I did. Castro was adamant that I set myself up, and the best way to do that was to tell what you English call "whoppers".
Self: Some people believed those whoppers for a while.
Nixon: Not for long. I managed to make right-wing thinking quite unrespectable for a while. And of course Castro was correct. The only way to shift books these days is to get yourself covered in dog-do.
Self: Who *was* Deep Throat?
Nixon: Me.

Bill Greenwell

A N Wilson: So you've always wanted to get married?
Cardinal Hume: Oh yes—doesn't everyone?
Wilson: But, of course, you haven't. Your Eminence? I said you hadn't.
Hume: Yes. No, not exactly. There was Juliette. But the ceremony was a joke. At least, I think it was. Then there are the dreams. At least I think they are dreams.
Wilson: You get married in these dreams? To the same woman, or different ones?
Hume: Different ones, of course. I can't see what is the point of marrying the same person over and over again.
Wilson: How many times have you married then?
Hume: At least a hundred.
Wilson: But what about your wives—do you see them again?
Hume: All the time. The woman-constable on duty over there—Agnes Parker. We were married at Croydon in 1975—or 6, was it? She's still wearing my ring. So that couldn't have been a dream, could it?
Wilson: When you marry, are you in pyjamas?
Hume: Oh no—in full fig, with a carnation. Don't you have dreams of being married, Mr Wilson? I thought all men did.

George Moor

Self: And so you settled in Assisi?
St Francis: Assisi, yes. There was no competition, building land was readily available, and the Pope was happy. Scope for a women's branch, and the hunting was excellent.
Self: You mean hunting for tormented souls, in need of ministry and the special care only Franciscans can give?
St Francis: No. Well, I mean yes: that was, of course, always part of our work—indeed, the most important part of our work. But the hunting certainly influenced our choice of site.
Self: You mean—trapping?
St Francis: Traps, snares, nooses, decoys, slings, cross-bow, line. Yes. All into the pot.
Self: But hasn't your image always been one of gentleness towards animals?
St Francis: All in the fun of the sport. Whistle 'em down and knock 'em on the head.
Self: But don't you feel that bloodthirsty killing undermines your teaching?
St Francis: Man has to live—and Sister Moon, especially Sister *Hunter*'s Moon, was a great help. Sharing in common nature, you can't help being red in tooth and claw, can you? And it's no joke trying to keep the wolf from the door in a hungry monastery.

D A Prince

Boris Yeltsin: And I was, of course, far *far* better than that wimp Nureyev. In fact, in *Le Spectre de la Rose*, they say I jumped even higher than Nijinsky.
A N Wilson: So what went wrong?
Yeltsin: Well, Nijinksy always just *landed* on the stage—I always went *through* it. Reinforcing all the stages of Russia was ruining the economy. So I turned to acting instead.
Wilson: What sort of parts did you enjoy most?
Yeltsin: Anything really juicy and meaty—Tamburlaine, Falstaff, Catherine the Great...
Wilson: Catherine the Great?
Yeltsin: No problem. Another couple of months on hormones and I could

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have played Cleopatra—*and* had Sarah Bernhardt whimpering for mercy.

Wilson: So what made you give up acting?

Yeltsin: I was robbed.

Wilson: Robbed?

Yeltsin: Of a part. They'd just about cast me, when this little runt with a ridiculous strawberry birthmark came in—and they gave it to him instead. I was apo*plectic!*

Wilson: What was the part?

Yeltsin: Hamlet—and the little runt's been playing it ever since.

Martin Fagg

And then Douglas Hurd drank a small glass of wine. His manner suddenly changed.

"The woman's a total philistine," he bellowed.

There was a sudden silence in the restaurant—except for the sound of coughing as the Queen Mother (who earlier in the evening had been entertaining us all with her impressions of each of the royal corgis) choked on yet another fish bone. I should add here that between her coughing and her gulping down vast amounts of bread, the QM was heard to say that fish bones had never been a problem until Mrs Thatcher had come to power.

Mr Hurd was also vexed about Mrs Thatcher.

"She's just a philistine," he repeated. "She's never read one of my books—prefers that Archer fellow, would you believe. She's never read one of Baker's poetry anthologies. Never bought one of Ridley's watercolours—I know the chap's not exactly destitute, but he could do with a little bit of 'spare' now he's lost his ministerial salary. And I bet she's never played one of Waddington's board games—Monopoly and Scrabble, you know..."

Hurd chuckled, rather strangely, I thought. Perhaps he wasn't being serious. Perhaps he's just made a good joke. Who am I to say?

Simon Herbertson

No 3145 Set by Russell Lucas

George Steiner once remarked, on TV, that "modernism" began when Lytton Strachey pointed to a stain on Vanessa Bell's skirt and announced it was semen. Equally inspired insights of the parturient moment for any other movement, or "-ism", which you suspect had equally murky and as yet untold beginnings.

An Owl in a Sack Troubles No Man

A compilation of the best of our famous Weekend Competition 1979 - 88

Once upon a time there were four little rabbits - Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail and Peter - and very delicious they were too. (The Tale of Peter Rabbit).

Robin Ravensbourne

The hand that wears the boxing glove cannot lift the vol-au-vent to the lips.

Bill Greenwell

Ayatollah Khomeini: I like to see a shapely pair of legs on a woman.

D.M. Stobbs

If you missed out, you can order your copy by sending a cheque for £2 (to cover admin, P&P), made payable to New Statesman & Society, to: Owl in a Sack, NS&S, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ. *Generous discounts for bulk orders.*

Chess columns, this one included, give a rather lop-sided view of tournament play. The games that appear in them are filtered through conceptions of what qualifies as publishable. What gets excluded may be stuff that is poor and dull. But it can also be games that are just rather long, or ones that are too complicated for the commentator to understand. Serious students will want to handle the raw material directly. The availability of game-scores is now better than ever, in the form of desktop-published bulletins or even on floppy discs. But what can you do with this indigestible mass of games? Few have the time or patience to play through them all, so you will have to make your own selection. One approach is just to play through the decisive games. Another is to pick out games with openings that you are interested in. What I would recommend, however, is "tracking" individual players: go through an event round by round choosing one of the players as your protagonist. This way you can work through a tournament several times over, with an increasing appreciation of what was going on.

This is just what I have been doing with the bulletins of this year's Harry Baines Memorial British Championships. A player whose progress would clearly repay tracking is Jonathan Mestel, as he seemed set to win the event before being pipped in the home straight. With Mestel you must expect some Dragons to appear—dodgy beasts that breathe fiercely, but sometimes only roast their own scales. This effort looks at first like an original brilliancy by Mestel, but collateral information reveals that it is really a footnote to existing theory:

Vic Knox - Mestel, Round 2. Sicilian Dragon 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 Nc4 13 Bxc4 Rxc4 14 h5 Nxh5 15 Nde2 All quite conventional so far. But here White is supposed to play 15 g4 Nf6 and only then 16 Nde2. **Qa5 16 g4 Ng3!** This is why White's move-order in this game is inferior. **17 Nxg3 Bxc3 18 Qh2?** This loses, whereas the natural 18 bxc3 might still make a draw: 18...Qa3+ 19 Kb1 Be6 (threatening 20...Rb4+ and stronger than 19...Ra4 20 Qh2) 20 Qh2 h6 21 Nf5! (but not 21 Qxh6 Rb4+ and Black mates on c2) gxf5 22 gxf5, and now Black is forced to take a repetition with 22...Rb4+ 23 cxb4 Bxa2+ 24 Ka1 Bb3+ etc. In fact that all happened in a 1975 game Kaplan v Tarjan. What Mestel adds is the finishing touch—and very elegant it is too. **Bxb2+! 19 Kxb2 Qb4+ 20 Kc1 Qa3+ 21 Kd2 Rxc2+! 22 Kxc2 Qxa2+ 0-1** If the King stays in the c-file 23...Rc8+ mates, or if 23 Kd3 Bb5+.

If that was all theory and tactics, a later round produced a lesson in strategy from Mestel:

Mestel - Norwood, Round 7. English Opening. 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 g6 4 e3 Bg7 5 d4 This is reckoned to be strong for White because d4-d5 is coming with tempo on the Nc6. **Nf6 6 d5 Na5** Why should Black's game be suspect here? After all, he often plays like this to good effect in variations of the King's Indian, such as the Panno. The difference is that if White has fianchettoed his KB, the c4 pawn is a bit weak, and so the Na5 has something to do. Here it is just out on a limb. **7 Be2 d6 8 0-0 0-0 9 e4 e6 10 Bf4 Re8 11 Rc1 exd5 12 exd5 Ne4?** The desire to unveil the Bg7 is understandable, but in such positions...Bg4 is an absolute strategic necessity for Black. What else is that QB going to do? **13 Nxe4 Rxe4 14 Bg5 Bf6 15 Bd3 Re8 16 Qd2 Bxg5 17 Nxg5 b6 18 Rfe1 Rf8 19 Qf4 Kg7** Because of the undeveloped Bc8 Black has failed to establish communication between his pieces. Mestel simply feeds his pieces over to establish a decisive superiority on the K-side. **20 Re3 Nb7 21 Rce1 h6 22 Re7! 1-0** Yes, it is the end already. For if 22...hxg5 23 Qxg5 White threatens Qxg6+, and after 23...Kg8 24 Bxg6 the Black K dies a lonely death.

Of course, not all players can be followed with the same assurance of good play. Some perhaps should even be stamped with a health warning. For example, what should we make of the eccentric Michael Basman, who plays 1 h3 or 1...h6 in all his games? His results are not bad (6 out of 11 in this tournament), but I would not recommend his methods. There does seem to be a rationale to his play, however: if you don't move your centre pawns it can be safe to leave your King in the middle. Here is one example in which the Basmanic strategy worked:

Buckley - Basman, Round 10. 1 d4 h6 2 e4 a6 3 Bd3 c5 4 dxc5 e6 5 Be3 Qc7 6 b4 a5 7 c3 Nc6 8 Qa4 Nf6 9 Ne2 g5 This seems to be part of "the system". **10 Na3 Ng4 11 Bd2 Qb8 12 Nb5 b6 13 Ng3 bxc5 14 Be2 Ba6 15 c4 h5 16 bxa5 h4 17 Nf1 Nge5 18 Bxg5 Nd4 19 Nxd4 cxd4 20 Nd2 d3 21 Bd1 Rg8 22 Rb1 Qc7 23 Bxh4 Bh6 24 Bb3 Qc5 25 Bg3 Rc8 26 Rd1** White has displayed a fondness for pawns, and there they are, blocking the action of his pieces. **Rxg3! 27 hxg3 Ng4 28 Rf1** If 28 0-0 Bxd2 and ...Qh5. **Be3!** Now f2 is indefensible and White is massacred. **29 Nf3 Nxf2 30 a3 Nxd1 31 Bxd1 Bxc4 32 Qb4 d2+ 33 Nxd2 Qxb4 34 axb4 Bxd2+ 35 Kxd2 Bxf1 36 Ba4 Rb8 37 Kc3 Kd8 0-1** It almost looks as if Basman had the game under control—but I still can't believe it!

Bulletins for the British Championship and many other tournaments are available from: BB Enterprises, 23 Ditchling Rise, Brighton BN1 4QL.

George Botterill

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